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MaruMA:Volume07:Prologue

I only learned how to ride a bike when I was fairly old.

The location is the park, the equipment is a child's bike without safety wheels. On the blue frame with cartoon pictures, there are also the many baseball stickers my old man insisted on.

"Promise, you won't let go!"

My father nods, crouching as he holds on to the rack at the back:

"Don't worry! Yuu-chan, I definitely won't let go, and even if I do I'll tell you beforehand."

We made a pinky swear.

And so my feet, trembling with excitement and nerves, pressed down on the heavy pedals. Every time the pedals make a full round, the early summer breeze kisses my face, and my short fringe pats my forehead. My father's footsteps become hastier, I know he's running as he helps me keep the bike steady. When the footsteps stop, I get excited beyond my wits, and even the pedals feel half as light as they did before. I've finally learned how to ride! Although measuring the distance, it was only around a few hundred metres.

At that moment, full with a childish sense of accomplishment, I turned back to look for my father, who was supposed to be standing in the distance.

"I've learned how to ride... Eh?"

Father was still holding onto the rack, his face red, breathlessly saying,

"You see... Papa... kept his... promise... and didn't let go... right?"

Every time I think back to that day, I feel embarrassed.

......Honestly, though, anyone else would have let go halfway, right?

Translation of chapter 1, novel 8

Just be warned that the characterizations of some people are very different from what was shown in the anime. Yuuri, for instance, does have a darker side and is not as naïve or sweet-tempered all the time. In this chapter he was a bit pervy...

Novel 8 starts after Yuuri is rescued by Wolfram from the cliff, they're in Caloria after Maxine opened the box. The story is from Yuuri's point of view, unless stated otherwise. Also note that the novels are starting to really differ from the anime after this, as season 2 of the anime is not based on the novels, but written by the animators themselves....

And... my translation is definitely not perfect, sorry. Most of the problems in that are regarding translations of names that never appeared in the anime, so... maybe someone can help me? Also, there might be mistakes I made, so anyone who has read the novel, in fact, anyone who notices any mistakes, please tell me...

Novel 8: Chapter 1

I only learned how to cycle at a not so young age.

The location was the park, my bicycle was a child's bike without training wheels. On the blue body of the bike, which had cartoons all over it, were baseball stickers that my father had insisted that I paste.

"Promise me, you won't let go!"

My father half squatting and gripping the bike rack nodded to me.

"Don't worry! Yuu-chan, I definitely won't let go, even if I do I'll tell you first." Let's make a pinky promise.

I started pedaling the heavy bike pedals with my legs, which were shivering because I was so nervous and excited. Every time I completed a cycle on the pedals, the breeze of early spring blew gently against my face, my short bangs flapping against my forehead. Father's footsteps gained momentum, I knew he

was jogging along while supporting my bike. When I couldn't hear his footsteps anymore, I was filled with excitement, the pedals seemed to be half their original weight.

I finally learned how to cycle! But looking back at the distance I covered, it was only a few hundred meters.

Filled with a childish sense of pride, I looked back at my father who (I thought) was standing a long distance away.

"I finally learned how to cycle.....huh?!"

Father was still gripping my bike rack, red in the face and panting.

"See, daddy... did keep... his promise...didn't let go...right?"

Every time I remembered this incident I would feel so ashamed.

....Honestly, most people would release their hold along the way, right?

I think the expression on my face was not exactly pleasant right now.

Although it was now winter, wearing this iron mask was suffocating.

"Poof! And it makes it hard for me to breathe!"

Bearing the pain of my eyelashes being pulled (along with the mask), I plucked the mask off my face forcefully. Air rushed in through my nostrils, helping my overheated face to cool down.

"Really...I have to hand it to Fluurin and Norman Gilbert, wearing this mask for so many years."

"Maybe it's because they haven't been running around like we're doing now."

After getting off our horses at the intersection, we could only walk to get to the harbor. The stone slabs covering the road were cracked and uneven, we could see collapsed buildings and overflowing drains everywhere along the bumpy road. Not only that, citizens who had lost all hope were sitting anywhere they wanted to along the road, children who were trying to find their parents or food were crying out agitatedly while running through the streets, so that it was impossible for horses to get through this area.

We must not touch those four boxes – because Small Shimaron used the

wrong key to open The End of the Earth, part of the sealed unknown force became uncontrolled, causing massive damage to the

Midwest section of the land, including Caloria.

The strong Fluurin Gilbert never shed a tear, she just spent all her efforts on patrolling and comforting the citizens. After getting back to her family estate, she started shouting orders to her soldiers to distribute water and food among the citizens immediately. Even I, wearing the mask of Norman Gilbert, joined in on her efforts.

Fluurin, gritting her teeth and dragging her tired body along, did her best to fulfill her duties as the wife of the regent of the land. Despite her fever and stomach pain that prevented her from getting up from the chair, she still summoned all the rulers of the counties to gather in the meeting room, and according to her promise divided the rations equally among the all the counties of Caloria.

But just relying on the rations in the estate would not be enough to satisfy the hunger of all the people.

I never thought that Caloria, after regaining peace through much difficulty, would be almost totally destroyed like this.

I forced Fluurin, who was now completely unable to move (due to her pain) to remain in her room, and made my way to the Gilbert business harbor. The harbor, originally so full of life and thronging with people, had been destroyed so much that there was no trace of its original splendor, the remains of the beautiful stone slabs were in pieces all over the place. There were several deep and wide ditches across the land, causing the peaceful farmlands of the inland to be flooded by seawater, and the earth and grass to wither up.

The kindly citizens of a few days ago had turned into violent rebels who robbed the collapsed shops; the originally peaceful neighbors would attack each other over fighting for water wells; hungry children, with no more energy left to cry, would be sitting with dull expressions on the ground.

This kingdom had been lacking in young people originally, both manpower and rations were now seriously lacking.

The women, children and old folk, forced to endure the cold without shelter, were shivering, only the cargo ships anchored at the harbor had lights on in the evening.

Some people, trying to get the citizens to gather around, were shouting with all their might at the depressed people. However, a loud-voiced man was standing at the corner of the street, shouting, "It's the end of the world!"

"He might be right you know..."

"What're you talking about? The end of the world? Don't be silly, he's not Nostradamus."

I was just going to answer Murata's opinion, but my tone had become sharp without my noticing. This was the first time I had seen such destruction, and my palms were sweating. No, not just my palms, the sweat pouring from my neck and back were taking away my body heat, making me shiver.

"...We must find a way to help."

We have to find someone else for that.

"Darn it, but I really don't know what to do....although I've been living in 关东,

and have put effort while participating in drills (for disasters), but once I really face them, I still don't know what to do...."

"We should thank television, Shibuya."

I stared blankly at Murata, thinking, "What should I say at a moment like this?" But my friend, with his dyed blond hair and wearing his colored contact lenses, was smiling serenely while gazing at the other end of the harbor.

"Aren't there usually news reports on tv about disasters and refugee camps? Even if this the first time for you, you should know what to do."

He was right, in the past I did see a lot of similar scenes. Like on the news, documentaries, movies or dramas.

"But just relying on those is not enough right? I'm not the type of person to just watch baseball and cartoons (so I know that its not enough). By the way, I'm

a good kid that watches tv in good lighting and at a distance of over 2 meters, you know."

My secretive friend cocked his head slightly and narrowed his eyes.

"This is a world without television or radio, yeah, that does make me feel so familiar with it." (I think Murata is actually mocking Yuuri who seems stuck back on Earth when considering rescue efforts)

"And there're also no vehicles... wait, Murata, what're you.... argh, just forget it."

Whether Murata has SKY PERFECT TV is not important right now, what was important was whether I had knowledge on dealing with situations like this. (SKY PERFECT TV is a cable channel in

Japan

which broadcasts various programmes on sports, entertainment *etc.* Yuuri means that Murata could have gained knowledge on rescue efforts through watching it). Although I had never dealt with disasters before, I could just do what I had seen others do before (on tv). This reminded me of the day I first pitched a baseball, after standing by and watching my brother and father practicing for so long.

"Food... no, water is the most important thing. Gather all those who still have energy left and divide them to all the areas to help... then set up a tent for food preparation. Hm... seems like we still need to set up a headquarters dealing with any unexpected situation, Is there a United Nations or Red Cross society here?"

"You're doing this upon your own insistence."

That's right.

I gripped my silver-colored mask tightly. At this moment Wolfram and Dakaskos returned from the few ships that had not sank. Yozak, in his white apron, was with them. He probably wants to be a white angel (nurse). He was leading a strange man, who had his arms full of sacks of goods. Upon seeing me, the man dropped all of them at once. His slightly aged face had an expression similar to bursting into tears of happiness.

"Thank goodness you're alright!"

He ran past Wolfram and Dakaskos towards me, kneeling down at my feet.

"Aah! Wh... what is this?"

"Thank God you're alright...."

The man, bowing his head while his eyes filled with tears, had very little hair on his head. With the weak sunshine shining on him, he looked just like St Francis Xavier.

"Just as I thought, that was a ship from our own kingdom. Although resembling a cargo ship on the outside, all the crew are soldiers under the orders of this man. This is Captain Saismoya."

The third son of the ex-Maou was kicking at the hemp cloth sacks while speaking, with an expression of disgust on his face. He probably was not pleased at being overtaken by the captain.

He is an angelic-looking bishounen with a head of shining golden hair and emerald green eyes that reminded me of a lake. However, after knowing him for a few days I discovered his true nature, he is actually a stubborn brat that likes to make snide comments..... that was what I thought anyway! But lately Wolfram von Bielefeld had been somehow different from the person I first met. The three brothers originally had no similarities between them. However, lately I could see the similarities of Wolfram's eldest brother, who was constantly frowning, and his second brother, who had thick skin, in him. If I had to be more definite, he would be a cool-looking and fashionable bishounen?

My... my god! I can't compare with him in looks.

"The other ships in the original fleet will arrive in two or three days. I never thought that my eldest brother, usually so calm, would send out a quarter of the navy after receiving the letter delivered by the Kohi."

"A quarter? Why?"

"THIS... IS... ALL... TO... FIND... YOU!"

Wolfram gritted his teeth while spitting out the words one by one, his furious face approaching me.

"Don't you understand your own situation?! You disappeared from the kingdom without a clue under dangerous circumstances!"

"S...s... sorry."

"You're hopeless. Now Gunter has become like that, and Conrad...."

He stopped speaking for a moment, then started again, avoiding my eyes. Maybe he was hoping that Conrad's situation was not as bad as it seemed.

"Anyway, the rest of the ships will be arriving soon. The Duchars' ship will probably be out in the sea by tomorrow, they're the best in naval war, and their ship is fast beyond belief, because there's a Karbelnikov's speeding device installed on it. Boarding that ship will the safest way to get back home."

"Back home? Who?"

"Do I need to explain? Of course I mean everyone! Although maybe we can't ALL get on the same ship!"

"Everyone? I can't go back yet! I can't just abandon all these people and leave by myself. Caloria is devastated, and all this business of the boxes have me worried, and Conrad's arm...."

Every time I thought back about what happened to Weller-kyo, I would have to stop breathing and speaking. It's not that I haven't dealt with all that I feel, it's actually that I didn't dare to deal with it.

".... I can't go back without dealing with all this.... Although I'm just masquerading, but now I AM Norman Gilbert. All the people here believe that I'm the leader here, leaders have to be at disaster areas to lend support, this is important to maintain the people's hopes and willpower. And also umm... does the term morale exist here? And the speed of rebuilding will be different?"

A speechless Wolfram pulled my ear, saying, "How many times do I have to tell you?! Are you a fool?"

The feeling I got (from what he said) was more like "ARE... YOU... AN.... IDIOT?!"

"What responsibilities do you have towards this land? Is this your kingdom? Are they your people? If you insist on helping them, you can just leave a medical

team and rations for them! We have experienced soldiers to help as well, if we could just find more people to repair the roads..."

"Oh yes! You're right! Gisela is a healer, if we could just use all the manpower here, the rescue efforts would be so much easier!"

"Yuuri! That wasn't what I meant!"

Wolfram glared at me. His tone had changed completely. Maybe he hadn't noticed, but the way he frowned looked exactly like his eldest brother.

"Captain Saismoya, are there rations and water on your ship?"

"Rations?"

Maybe my question was too unexpected, St.Francis Xavier had resumed his normal voice.

"In preparation for any unexpected events, we more or less have some..."

"That's great! Can you distribute them immediately among the people? Please do it fairly, give all that we have, and ask them to queue up while receiving the rations. Wait, are all the crew of the ship soldiers from our kingdom?"

"Of course. They're prepared to sacrifice their lives for you upon a word from you, Heika. And they were selected by His Exellency Gwendal, they're soldiers most resembling humans, so if you want them to spy on our enemies there should be no problem either."

His soldier's pride made him stand up erect inadvertently. Probably he was believes fully in his underlings' capabilities.

"That's even better! That means they're qualified to be voluntary rescue teams?"

"Vol... what's their mission?"

"It's not a mission! It's voluntary, so it's up to whether they want to or not. This is great, Murata, it's up to you to select suitable people! Next we need temporary shelters and portable toilets. Oh! It would be even better if we had diapers and milk powder for the babies. Although now we have Gisela and her team healing people all around the place, it would be better if their medical team is bigger, and they also need medicines and medical supplies. Aah! Darn it, it's

not enough! Rations, materials, manpower... they're all not enough!"

"Why don't you make a wish?"

Murata grabbed the long, thin white object hanging in front of my chest. It was a paper cutter I had bought from a young boy in a

考柏菲shop near the 隆卡巴river.

Although the paper cutter cuts paper, it doesn't cut

裁林家纸子(裁林家纸子

is the surname of an acting couple that specialize in stand-up comedy, famous for taking candid shots of each other. Yuuri is making a joke here as paper and

裁林家纸子

have the same pronunciation in Japanese). This paper cutter is a cultural relic made from the bones of an unidentified being.

"Make a wish on it."

"If a cultural relic can grant my wish, we won't be needing temples or shrines!"

"It's not a relic! It's so obviously part of a Kohi."

"What?!"

I almost dropped the light and dry blade.

"If that's true, this is human bone? ! It's human?!"

"It's not human, it's Kohi. Or it might be Kodi, which gather in flocks to lend emotional support, and can communicate through thinking. If they're lucky they even become spies. Hence our Mazoku soldiers will always bring tablets along to communicate with them. Those troops that started out late learned about your whereabouts because of them. But I didn't rely on the Kohi, I found you all by my own efforts..."

"Wow, I see that they're really good poets, who would've thought, looking at them..."

Murata made a really off-topic comment, cutting off Wolfram's bragging. I was staring at the object in my hand, and decided to try again.

"I said I wanted food, medicines, temporary shelters, milk powder and..."

"Just in case, why don't we try this?"

In front of everyone, a bird flew out from the front of Yozak's chest. It was a beautiful white dove which had its wings shut.

"Wow, that's so like Mr. Maric!" (Mr. Maric is a famous magician in Japan)

"Hey, that's not nice! Heika, I'm Yozak!"

"Come to think of it, this is the first time I saw a dove fly out from someone's chest.

Tokyo's Magic Robinson would be so envious..."

Influenced by my friend's (Murata) envy, I shifted my eyes down, and discovered that Yozak's right chest had gone flat. It seems like he used doves to pad up his chest...

Suddenly, Captain Saismoya turned back to stare at the medium sized ship that had just entered the harbor, then resuming his original tough navy voice, "I was wondering why there were such disturbing sounds of waves lapping (onto shore). Seems like Shimaron's communications boat just entered the harbor."

"Oh? Then they're after us?! They sent out soldiers to get us?"

About ten days ago, we were still in Small Shimaron being treated as experiment samples. But Maxine, the 'dog' of the king of Small Shimaron, Saralegi, had used the wrong key to open the box, causing part of the unknown force to lose control and leading to a massive earthquake in the land. We managed to escape during the chaos, preparing ourselves for death any time while making our way here.

However, judging from the destruction there, Small Shimaron could not have sent soldiers to get us, and Maxine was not supposed to know that I was a king.

"That's Big Shimaron's flag. I can never forget the war on the

SarafianSea

, they used an underhanded night attack, thank goodness we managed to

gather up our forces and burned up all those countless and hateful flags! Just thinking about the burning flags of the enemy ships all over the glowing red sea, even now it makes me shiver with excitement..... aah, Heika, I'm so sorry! Seeing those hateful Big Shimaron ships make me lose myself."

It seems like he is very easily excited.

"Fluurin Gilbert has always been on the side of Big Shimaron, so there probably won't be any trouble. However, why have they sent people over during this hectic time?"

"They have a green triangular flag, so it means they're ambassadors visiting various kingdoms. Yuuri, remember, even if we're at war we never attack representatives, ambassadors are neutral, so everyone at sea is prohibited from attacking them."

"Oh I see, so the Searex colors of their flag means 'no attacking'" (Searex is a baseball team of the

湘南district in Japan).

The medium sized ship slid smoothly into the harbor mouth, its light green triangular flag flapping underneath their yellow national flag. Maybe due to the expertise of the person steering the ship, their craft deftly avoided all the sunken ships at the harbor to reach shore.

Two very slim youths stepped elegantly down from the ship. They first reached out with their toes, followed by their heels, just like a bride stepping out on a red carpet.

"Aren't you supposed to hide your face? At least cover up your hair and eyes."

I only noticed after Murata reminded me. I quickly pulled on Norman Gilbert's silver-colored mask, strapping on the leather strap at the back of my head.

I must meet ambassadors from human countries in the role of Caloria's appointed leader.

I just don't know if they were aware that the original leader Norman Gilbert had passed away. But as Fluurin was resting now, only I, 'the man in the iron mask', can represent Caloria in greeting ambassadors.

Yozak and Saismoya moved to either side of me. As Wolfram was a startlingly conspicuous bishounen in this human part of the world, I pushed him behind me with my elbow, then also made sure that Murata was behind me.

The two slim men floated towards me as if they were on clouds, then greeted me civilly. From their unenthusiastic tone and gestures, this was just a formality (for them). But what made me tongue-tied was not their attitude, but the difference between our appearances.

"Wh... what beautiful hair...."

According to logic, a man would not be happy to hear someone praising his hair. However....

"Thank you for your praise, long hair is the pride of us soldiers of Big Shimaron, we nourish it everyday with egg yolk oil."

It turns out that there are men who feel happy after praise like this.

At this moment Murata behind me interjected, "Please dial the toll-free number 0120-78641438." (0120 is the code for all toll free numbers in Japan

, 0120-78641438 has the same pronunciation as 'Shimaron's soldiers have long hair' in Japanese)

Hey, there is also the ponytail hairstyle (in Shimaron)!

I just never thought that ponytails would be the norm in Small Shimaron, while Big Shimaron would have long floating hair as the main hairstyle, seems like Big and Small Shimaron do have a difference. The places are not the same, the styles are not the same, even the water flow

volume is different.

The two ambassadors, in the main colors of yellow and brown, had slightly curling light brown hair that reached the middle of their backs. Every hair was thick, soft and light. If there were a battle in the forest on a rainy day, it might not be to their advantage.

Both of them had reddish-brown eyes that were merely presentable but lacked character.

"Are you the appointed leader of this colony of Shimaron – Norman Gilbert?"

I could only mumble my answer, in a tone that was neither too high nor low. The man on the right, the one in charge of explanations, irked me when he said 'colony of Shimaron', this was supposed to be Small Shimaron's colony.

"The disaster this time seems to have brought you great damage. We representing Shimaron wish with all our hearts that you can recover soon."

"Th.. thank you."

Upon hearing such a polite and formal tone, I, who had grown up in a normal family (and unacquainted with grand situations), did not know how to respond.

"Today we came especially to inform all Calorians of the opening ceremony of Big Shimaron's annual elimination Olympics that celebrate intelligence, speed and skill! It's the gathering of the best talents under the sun."

"Huh?"

The ambassador was not annoyed at my response which had slipped out unwittingly; instead he repeated again, "It's the opening ceremony of Big Shimaron's annual elimination Olympics that celebrate intelligence, speed and skill! A gathering of the best talents under the sun."

This sounded like a swimming competition like those they organize for celebrities, and most participants would be female, I wonder if there would be any unintentional breast revealing?

"Hopefully under the leadership of Gilbert the regent (of Caloria), skilled contestants can be found to represent Caloria the colony of Shimaron in this event."

"What're you talking about?! It's not as easy as just opening a letter...."

But the duo with the floating hair had handed me a roll of rough paper after their speech, then turned and went back the way they had come. Maybe they were anxious to get to the other countries.

"... What did he say, what elimination contest did he mean?"

"Ten times."

Murata was scratching his chin in awe.

"What ten times?"

"They number of times they mentioned Shimaron! If we include what they said in their farewell speech then it'll have exceeded ten times."

"Even if you calculate so precisely, there won't be anyone to test you on that, you know."

"Hmph, that's the way most humans act."

Wolfram, who I had pushed behind myself, was commenting scornfully.

"They kept repeating 'Big Shimaron' to remind you that this (Caloria) is their colony. I never thought that they would resort to such underhanded measures to emphasise their power."

"Wolf, as an ex-prince you shouldn't express yourself in such an ungentlemanly way, should you?"

"Don't the people back there (in Shin Makoku) do the same thing (as the ambassadors of Big Shimaron)?"

Murata's casual remark was completely innocent, but it sent a chill down my spine.

"That tactic (the tactic used by the ambassadors) might be simple, but it it's also effective (in instilling a sense of their power), right?" (this is still Murata speaking)

"....Hmph!"

The striking and angelic-looking bishounen was obviously losing his temper. Even if he didn't speak, just standing next to him I could feel his temperature rising and his blood starting to boil.

"Yuuri!"

"Aah! Wh.. what is it?"

"You aren't still thinking all that nonsense (of remaining in Caloria) are you? Listen to me clearly, You're going back to Shin Makoku this instant! You aren't obligated to attend a ceremony for humans! You're a king really lacking in self consciousness! There isn't anything that can make me more ashamed to be from the same kingdom as you than this!"

"Don't pick on me only! Come on, don't just vent your anger on me!"

Wolfram, who had a high sense of self-pride, hadn't reacted to Murata's remarks. Although I couldn't be sure, there seemed to be a mutual understanding between them. No matter how sharp Murata's remarks were, the third son (of the ex-Maou) would only vent his anger on me. According to my private observations, they would even purposely avoid each others' eyes.

Although Yozak and Murata had met at the Gilbert family estate, but Yozak had greeted him in a way unfamiliar to me, and he had adjusted himself to this world at an unusually quick speed, this seemed incredible to me.

Murata, who are you... who are you really?

But I choked back the questions that came to me.

If I asked my friend this question, then I would have to disclose all my secrets to him as well. If I suddenly proclaimed myself (to Murata) as the Maou, he would not believe me, just like any normal human being. And if I let him know that I was engaged to an 82-year old bishounen, I simply did not dare to gauge his reaction. If he went back to

Japan

and spread this around, then I could lose any hope of ever getting a girlfriend, it would be a fate too horrible for me.

To reach this rosy future (Please! You HAVE to come), I would just have to contain my curiosity.

"Alright, no matter you want to participate or not...."

I unrolled the roll of paper that had been forced on me while talking in a voice that did not belong to 'the man in the iron mask'. It was the voice of the wimpy and clueless Maou that was trying his best even when he's stuck in a foreign country.

"Caloria's real leader is Fluurin, this time we should ask for her opinion right?"

"There's no need to ask, after all we're going back."

"What's the matter with him? He's not small anymore, how come he misses home so much?"

Aah... that Japanese boy's thoughtless remark was starting to make Wolfram's blood boil again.

But if Murata found out his real age, he would definitely be so shocked that his glasses fell off.

Well, the above is my first attempt at translating these novels. Hope I made the meanings clear.

关东, 裁林家纸子, 隆卡巴

etc are names in he Chinese translation that I wasn't able to translate into English. Since kanji and Chinese characters are similar, maybe someone who knows kanji can help? Or maybe someone who's read the novels can help?

Kodi and Saismoya are guesses on my part, as Kohi is

骨飞, so... I guessed骨地

is Kodi. Saismoya is the pronunciation I got from the Chinese version. Someone please tell me if I'm wrong ^^.

Also, I forgot what they called the arena event in Big Shimaron... can someone tell me the actual term they used?

And can anyone tell me the full names of Anissina, Yozak, Maxine? I need them in future translations. Also, what's the name of the doll Gunter's soul(?) is transferred into after he was poisoned? And what's the name of the book written by Anissina?

Sorry for all these questions, my translation is not perfect, but it's the best I can do now...

Translation of chapter 2, novel 8

Just in case anyone was wondering about that seemingly random 'bicycle' memory in the previous chapter:

Since the 'cliff rescue scene' happened at the ending of the previous novel (novel 7), Yuuri might be associating the memory of his father talking about 'not letting go' with what Wolfram had said, which was about 'not letting go' too.

However, it's actually open to our own interpretation.

Just one thing is for certain, Takabayashi sensei's writing has a deeper meaning than is apparent on the surface, and seemingly random parts are really not that random at all. I can only try my best to get the meanings across XD. Sentences in brackets are explanations, sentences between asterisks * are my own comments, feel free to ignore them.

Novel 8: Chapter 2

"Did you say Dai Shimaron's annual elimination contest involving running, attacking and defending? The World's Best Fighter Tournament?"

Flynn Gilbert, in a plain sleeping gown, stumbled out from her room.

"....I think that wasn't quite what they said."

"Hm... maybe I got the name wrong, anyway they kept repeating 'Shimaron, Shimaron', and the ambassadors had long flowing hair. I think there're further details on the letter."

After getting past all the obstacles to return to Caloria, Flynn soon fell sick and had to rest in bed, maybe due to witnessing the destruction of her homeland by that uncontrolled power, or maybe just because the taxing journey back had exhausted her. But this was hardly surprising, she hadn't planned on falling into the trap laid by Shou Shimaron, or being experimented on by them either. Although her own land was a colony of another kingdom, Flynn, as the wife of regent of the land, was surprisingly strong in the face of so many difficulties.

"Then it means that this year is the fourth... I didn't notice..."

"Do they hold this event every four years?"

"Yes. Every kingdom will seek out representatives to participate in Dai Shimaron's tournament."

"Then it's similar to the Olympics?"

Flynn placed the letter onto the table, keeping its four corners down with animal-shaped paperweights. She looked awful, even her beautiful light golden hair had lost its original luster.

"Flynn, I still think you had better lie down and rest..."

"Don't worry, I should move round a bit. And we're not married or lovers, it seems rather inappropriate that you (as a male) should march into my bedroom, doesn't it?"

Wolfram's mood seemed to improve greatly after hearing that. The first time he met her, he had interrogated me, "Who's that woman? Who is she to you?" He had even questioned the relationship between Flynn and me.

"....the elimination tournament that tests intelligence, speed and skill! The World's Best Fighter Tournament is about to begin.... Anticipating Caloria to send their best warriors to participate.... They already know that we don't have any time to seek out participants at this time (of emergency), and yet they send their ambassador with this news."

"What kind of competition is this? Is it like the baseball tournament in Japan

, or the World's Baseball Tournament or wildcard competitions?"

"All you're talking about is baseball! Can't you at least mention the World Cup or the Toyota Cup?" (The Toyota Cup is an annual international football competition sponsored by the

Toyota company)

And aren't you talking only about football?

I was thinking about Murata's own shortcomings, while trying to imagine what the World's Best fighter tournament would look like. Ninja Turtles, 赛亚人、超级赛亚人、超弩级终极超级百万吨…… superheroes of the turtle variety.

(赛亚人、超级赛亚人、超弩级终极超级百万吨are all superheroes popular in Japan)

"I've never seen the World's Best Fighter before either."

"World's Best Fighter?"

"Yes, the World's Best Fighter, is there anything wrong?"

I was only surprised at that term, it sounded like the remains of noodles or the name of a strange exotic dish.

(I think this is due to the Japanese pronunciation)

"Caloria has never entered before. Not only because of lack of talent, but also because we don't have any suitable young people to participate in a challenge they can never win."

"So you mean that you don't know what the competition is about?"

"Yes. But I think that the winner of all three events of intelligence, speed and skill will be awarded a special honor."

"What do you think it is?"

If it was just the awarding of a medal, I think the winner would definitely lose his cool on the podium.

Flynn sighed and said, "It's an honor that everyone desires, but no one will ever get it."

"Then could it be a wish that will come true?"

"But what do you mean by a 'wish'? Is it for the well-being of your whole family or for great wealth?"

"Shibuya, they aren't god."

"It doesn't matter! Just imagine, you could wish for a land of your own, or to regain the power and wealth of your family, or even gold and diamonds....

Anything you wish will come true! On the face of it anyway."

"Ah, I know! The winner gets to marry the princess of Shimaron? I see, that's so romantic. Going beyond nationalities for love, burning passion, wild wayward youth!" *their imaginations are going quite far isn't it? XD*

I see, let's not imagine it like Dragonball, it could be more like ancient Roman gladiators.

"No, it's impossible, Shimaron doesn't have a princess. And no one has ever thought about such a romantic notion, nor has anyone ever had a wish come true."

"Then what does it mean? Are they just playing around with us? Enticing us with rewards, then letting us down?"

I pointed at the lower half of the thick and rough letter. But maybe because of the overly cursive writing, I couldn't understand even a word.

"Look here, the winners of the first tournament – Dai Shimaron. Winners of the second tournament –Dai Shimaron.... All the winners from the first to the latest tournaments have been Dai Shimaron. Just looking at this, it's impossible that anyone else can win!"

She rolled the paper up again, smiling self-deprecatingly.

"However according to our present condition, there won't be many participants. Most of the kingdoms in the mid-west region of the mainland are busy rebuilding, and the last day for entering is six days later. Getting from here to Donierson would take at least twenty days even if we went at full speed."

"Then we just give up without trying?"

"That's right, there's nothing we can do about it."

"It's such a pity... it's not easy to get a chance to make a wish...." why're you still stuck in that 'wish' fantasy of yours Yuuri?

However my brain started working furiously. Maybe it (the prize) was new baseball shoes, baseball gloves, or lighter equipment than the ones I used. Or maybe shin-guards that could go with

狮子蓝石(

maybe a team in Japan?), protective goggles like those worn by

小宫山悟

(a professional baseball player in Japan). However there shouldn't be baseball equipment in this world, where would they find the

光蜡树 (tree of which the wood is used to create bats)

to create baseball bats anyway? Wait, wait, if we thought about the whole (baseball) team, first we must have a clean storing space....

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"...storage..... is it?"
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Murata who had just figured out what was in my mind, although so surprised he could hardly speak, took the words out of my mouth. I didn't hesitate, instead I just said what was in my head.

"What about asking for the box?"

"Box?"

Flynn tilted her head like an innocent girl, it seems like she hadn't quite understood what I meant.

"Yes, the box. If we win then we can ask for the box as a prize, maybe they'll be so surprised they won't know how to refuse?"

Wolfram was very excited, hitting his knee hard (in realization).

"Dai Shimaron has 'The End of the Wind'!"

"That's right! It's because they have that box that you want to bring along descendants of the Wincott family isn't it? Because you want to use the Wincott poison to control the person that's the key to 'The End of the Wind?"

According to my faithful G-SHOCK, that had happened about five hundred and four hours ago. Concealing the death of her husband Norman Gilbert, Flynn Gilbert had protected Caloria in the role of 'the man in the iron mask'. She had had dealings with Dai Shimaron secretly despite the objection from Shou Shimaron.

She had stated, "Those who had ruled this land in the past concealed the Wincott poison, which can control anyone, in the depths of this estate. I'm willing to hand it over, but on several conditions. You must reduce the number of

Calorians that are recruited as soldiers for your kingdom, and also let our youths return to our country (as I can no longer stand losing our own citizens in the wars your own kingdom engage in)." In the end Flynn had succeeded in closing the deal, handing over the poison to Dai Shimaron.

At that time, we had also lost our way here. We had concealed our identities by claiming to be Wincott descendants. The jewel I had worn had the same fittings as the insignia (of the Wincotts), which was not surprising. This was because it had been the property of Susanna Julia Wincott, who had escaped to the West and became a Mazoku.

It was then that Flynn had had an idea.

Only those with the blood of the Wincotts can control the humans who had been poisoned. If they could hand over the one with Wincott blood (Flynn had thought it was Yuuri) to Dai Shimaron, they would find it easier to control the person who was the key. If the deal had gone through, the Calorian youths would have been able to s=come back to their country.

Without considering the ethics of that action, her plan had been quite brilliant, the ones who blundered had been Dai Shimaron.

Because they had found two targets, one who was now in a semi-death-like state, the other whose whereabouts was now unknown. Although Conrad had only been hit by the poisoned arrow, he had lost his left arm, and had also been involved in an explosion.....

"Darn it!"

I slammed my fist against the wood-carved table.

That arm definitely belonged to Conrad, I just couldn't figure out why the arm that had been chopped off would wind up in the hands of Shou Shimaron. What puzzled me more was that since it had been the wrong key, why had Conrad been the target?

And...

Conrad.... You're still alive aren't you?

Would you come back to my side alive?

I had covered both my eyes with my palms without noticing it. I removed my fingers one by one, moving my right hand slowly from my face.

As I exhaled the air slowly from my lungs, I could see Wolfram's disappointed expression. Really, he needn't have worried, I wouldn't have cried in front of everyone.

"That's right."

The ruler of Caloria had gripped her own throat with her right hand, looking as if she felt like strangling herself.

"I had wanted to use you, I was prepared to betray you to fulfill my own dreams for the kingdom."

Von Bielefeld-kyo's sword clanged as he drew his sword out from its sheath a few centimeters. If I consented to it, he would have killed this woman on the spot. Actually he had said this many times, he probably had been serious, but....

"Don't be like this, Wolfram, I don't want you to do this. Flynn has.... Anyway let's settle this later."

"But ..!"

"It's all because of that box!"

I cut off her pained voice with (the name of) that cursed object.

"If it hadn't been for that 'The End of the Wind', all this wouldn't have happened. If the humans.... If Dai Shimaron hadn't gotten that weapon, they wouldn't have gone after Conrad and Gunter, we wouldn't have lost our way in this strange place, and there's more...."

This world had four objects that should never be touched. Men hadn't known what a terrible experience that their ancestors had gone through in sealing that horrifying power, nor did they know that tragic history.

Men now dreamt of claiming that power as their own, and were confident in their ability to control that power.

In the end, they had been so anxious to release that evil power, they had used the wrong key.

"If those idiots of Shou Shimaron hadn't experimented with the wrong key, this kingdom (Caloria) wouldn't have been destroyed. What're the names of the boxes they have again? They've 'The End of the Wind' and...."

"The End of the Land."

Murata answered in a toneless voice.

"That's right, 'The End of the Land", they still have it, they still have 'The End of the Land."

At this moment I felt as if I had had a strong dose of mint, I felt a shudder vibrate through my head. Then, in a voice so calm I couldn't believe it was my own, I said, "it can't fall into the hands of those foolish humans..... only we can have them."

"Ah!"

My friend responded in a very unnatural yet dramatic way.

"Why're you breathing so heavily, are you high?"

"Huh? Wh....what? What did I say?!"

I had changed back to the weak and clueless Heika, flipping my bangs embarrassedly.

"I'm not high! You know very well that I'm against drinking and smoking."

"I'm not saying that you're drunk, I meant that you're undergoing a 'natural high'."

"Don't think about saying I've a 'natural high', I don't even feel sick when I'm boarding public transport! It's Wolf who gets seasick!"

"Really? Then you don't have anything to worry about our school trip after graduation."

"That's right! Anyhow our school's graduation trip involves a full-day bus trip on the first day, unlike your private school that involves a plane trip, so..... huh? It's not the time for discussing transport is it? Back to what's important, we should be talking about the boxes! The boxes...."

"I never thought you would think of such a good plan, wimp."

Seeing that Wolfram had withdrawn his right hand from his sword, I heaved a sigh of relief. I understood his hatred of Flynn, but I couldn't let him, who hadn't been here at that time, inflict punishment because of how he felt.

"The boxes can't fall into the hands of the humans, that's perfectly right. But what do you say we should do? Do we attack Dai Shimaron before they discover how to use them? Anyway the naval forces will gather tomorrow, although they aren't fully armed, the emergency task force is made up of highly trained soldiers. If you're willing, I can teach you how to direct an army from the beginning."

"You want to teach me? Oh, I didn't mean that! Sorry, I probably used the wrong words! I didn't mean that I don't trust you, I didn't mean that at all! Really, I didn't mean that! Haven't I said so before!? I don't want to start a war, not under any circumstances."

Hey, don't yell at me so loudly!

"I.... well, that elimination contest about running, attacking, defending! The world's fighting pageant?"

"It's the elimination contest involving the combination of 'intelligence, speed, and skill'! The World's Best Fighter Tournament!"

"Right, if we win the title of World's Best Fighter, I think Dai Shimaron will have to give us the box."

Everyone responded with "Ah?" and "Yii?", the combination was the hilarious 'Ah yii'. (Ah yi means aunt in Chinese, don't know about the original Japanese text, sorry)

"They'll give the box to the champion....!?"

"Thanks, everyone for being so simultaneous in your disbelief, thanks a lot."

"Do you mean it? Yuuri!? Do we have to waste so much time? Actually we can just launch a sudden attack, can't we?"

"Wait a minute, Caloria doesn't have any potential participants now! Also, didn't I tell you what had happened before? It's impossible to win the championship!"

"Don't talk at the same time, you two!"

Only Murata was beaming without saying a word. I breathed in deeply before saying, "Please calm down, you two. First, Wolf, as I had said before, I'll never declare war. Then, Flynn, participating in such tournaments is actually meaningful, even if we don't win we won't suffer any loss, right? Even if we can't find any skilled participants, we can't just give up."

"Participating in tournaments is meaningful.... That's the first time I heard of such a thing."

Flynn put a hand to her forehead, bowing her head and trying to calm down.

"But didn't I tell you before, even if we went at full speed we'll have to spend at least twelve days to get there. Even if we start off now, we won't make it for the registration day!"

"When you said full speed you meant traveling by on land, didn't you?" "That's right."

I said a bit proudly, "Then what if we travel by sea? Don't we have that Duchars' speedcraft?"

TBC

Translation of chapter 3, novel 8

Translation of chapter 3, novel 8

The Duchars' speed craft was zooming ahead at three times the normal speed (compared to usual boats/ships).

Its hull was painted bright red, and it also had that extra air of grandeur, having been involved in the second naval war on the

中央茶

sea, hence people tended to call it 'The Red Starfish'.

"The Duchars have been warriors of the sea for generations, and this would have to start from the tale of Mindair Duchar-kyo, who fought the pirates in the north by himself...."

And so, our companion rambled on about the long history of the Duchars.

There was a golden (colored) sign mounted on the speed craft, with some text inscribed on it. I read the text by following it slowly with my finger, it would have been good if the books back in Shin Makoku were this simple.

"It's still somehow hard to believe that this craft is called 'The Red Starfish'." (Murata speaking)

"It sounds like Gaia." (Gaia is a character in 机动战士钢弹

, an anime in Japan. The nickname of Gaia is 'The Red Comet', comet and starfish in Japanese sounds similar) (still Murata speaking)

"Who do you mean? That German footballer?" (Yuuri speaking)

Since I'm a complete idiot with regards to football terminology, what I had said made Murata frown. Probably deciding that there was no point in continuing our conversation, he just waved his left hand. Hey, don't look down on me! At least I do know about the Series A of the German League and the Italian League. (Don't know if I used the correct terms for the football part, sorry. Guess I'm as bad as Yuuri)

Anyway, if I had to describe how it feels like to travel across the sea at three times the normal speed, I would immediately think of watching a video recording at three times the usual speed. Our surroundings slid past us in a blur, there was the ocean, the waves, the sky, the clouds, the seagulls and the algae. As we were going round the coast of the northern shore, a normal ship would take nearly fifteen days for us to get to Dai Shimaron. However, as this was the incredible 'Red Starfish', it would only take us approximately five days to get there.

"Five days is still too slow, we need to get there in four days!" (Yuuri speaking)

The ship's owner Descuss Duchar the Second (who had been talking about the history of the Duchars) told me assertively, "That's impossible."

"....then I guess five days would do just as well....."

Although I was secretly coveting the experience of a real disaster on the sea, imagining situations where there would be speeches such as "Captain, we're going down!", "How long will it take to repair the speed device?!", "We'll need five hours!", "That's too slow, we'll need to get it in shape within half an hour!" and other similar adventures, in reality I was no captain, and I really am so weak that I don't seem like a king at all.

We had been busy making preparations to embark on the journey, we were prepared to leave the Gilbert business harbor the next day.

I, forced to wear a mask when there was anyone else around, had been detained by the children who had risen early, in just a few moments I had been surrounded by a large crowd of them. These few days I had been playing the part of a good leader, constantly meeting with the people.

"Regent Norman, where're you going?"

"Are we ever going to see you again?"

From their perspective, they had just undergone a sudden and incredible disaster. It was perfectly natural for them to start to have their doubts again when they learnt that their leader was going to leave the land, especially since the Calorians hadn't seen Norman Gilbert for more than ten years. Just as their regent had come back, he had wanted to take his wife out for a trip on sea. No wonder they felt uneasy. Those little hands had been about to grip at my clothes,

but they shrank back almost immediately.

Probably those children were hesitant to touch their noble leader so straightforwardly.

"Please don't go, Regent Norman...."

"You'll come back, won't you?"

Don't worry, I'll come back, I'll definitely come back."

I felt an emotional turmoil inside me as I answered them.

It was because the real Norman Gilbert would never ever come back to this land. He was now lying in a cold grave, or maybe he was enjoying himself in paradise. Now, the person wearing the silver-colored mask was not the scarfaced regent, but was actually the wimpy Maou who had come from Shin Makoku, which was far away on the other side of the horizon.

At this moment I felt that I was betraying these children's trust with this big lie of mine.

Actually you've all been fooled! All fooled! Don't look at me with your innocent eyes. This isn't the real Norman Gilbert standing in front of you! However, all these children and their parents, they all believe that this stranger is their regent, they had even handed over the ruling of their land and their lives to me, a stranger.

"Hey, my friend!"

Murata, who had been about to board the ship, was turning around to talk to the children. His voice floated down from above.

"We're about to represent Caloria in a battle with Dai Shimaron, you know!"

"Battle

? Is there a war?" (the children are asking)

"No, no war, just a sport.... Hm... I should say a competition. He's going to participate in the elimination tournament involving the combination of intelligence, speed and skill! The World's Best Fighter Tournament. That really needs talent, you know...! We might even have to use phrases such as 'For the

honor of Caloria'!" (Murata talking glibly to the children XD)

The children's eyes shone.

"Representing our country in a tournament?"

"Because Norman Gilbert is our regent, so we as Calorians are the best?"

"That's right, remember to tell your friends! Tell them he's going to participate in the World's Best Fighter Tournament."

"For god's sake, don't exaggerate so much." (Yuuri speaking)

Although in the past baseball had been the mainstay of my life, I hadn't even qualified to become a catcher in my school team. Now I was in charge of the ruling of a country, and also about to represent that country in an important competition. Isn't this the equivalent of skipping past state championships and the leagues to represent

Japan

in the Olympics?! I don't think there would be anyone else on Earth who had taken such a great leap ahead.

Oh, my God....., what has my normal life turned into?

However, asking God about the fate of a Mazoku (demon), that seemed a bit unreasonable......

"Lady Flynn, are you leaving?" (one of the children talking to Flynn)

"Yes, Cara, but I'll return as soon as the tournament is over. And Meg, go and help your mother! Although your fathers, brothers and the other men will be coming back soon, your help will still be needed for now, you know!"

Flynn was stroking the cheek of the little girl, her long hair almost dragging on the ground. All the children were reluctant to leave, looking back frequently as they made their way back to the shelters.

"You know all of them?" (Yuuri speaking to Flynn)

"They always come to this area, but I can't really remember ALL of their names, it would be so much better id I could."

I suddenly felt that I had lost (to her as a ruler), I could just look away. She really was a good leader, if the ruling kingdom (Dai Shimaron) hadn't had a law forbidding women to rule, she might have been a wonderful leader, maybe even a good wife.

"This question might be a bit weird.... But I can't really think of any clever questions anyway." (Yuuri speaking)

"What's your question?"

"....do you like children?"

Flynn looked confused, then shook her head quickly. Her bangs floated up in mid-air.

"Wh...what? I don't have any!? I don't have any illegitimate child!"

"You're mistaken, I didn't mean to imply that. The one who has an illegitimate child is me." (Yuuri speaking)

"Huh?! You....you have a child?! Then...that must mean....you're married?"

"Hm... well, I'm a single parent..... Aah!"

A familiar sword had sliced down onto the cracked pavement between us.

"You dirty human female!"

"Dirty....."

"Don't think about flirting with my fiancé!"

The beautiful 82-year old bishounen was glaring at us with his veins popping out from his forehead. However Flynn had not been shocked by the attacking weapon, in fact she seemed more intrigued by the complicated relationships between the Mazoku. She was pointing at Wolfram and me while gasping, "F... fiance? Th...that must mean one of you had given birth....."

"Aah! Please, stop asking for more details....!" (Yuuri XD)

Murata can hear us here!

Just then my friend sauntered over to us, beaming and holding an iron box in his arms.

"Wow, Shibuya, you're engaged? You're just a high-school student! I see, that's why you aren't interested in girls your age."

"W...what?!"

"I never thought you would be like this, I was thinking maybe you were only attracted to older women or Lolitas. Ah, I see, you've reached the age for marriage unknowingly?"

I had just realized.... Talking about age, Wolf was a lot older than I was.

"W...wait, wait, Murata! Actually this whole business is very complicated.... I would advise you not to ask more!"

"Heika, what're you talking about? The engagement between His Excellency Wolfram and you is a great event of the country!"

"The whole country....?!"

I was sabotaged again by another person who was passing by. It was Dakaskos, Gunter's bald underling, he was holding a stack of boards in his arms, I wonder what he wants to do with them....

"No...no....It can't be?! The whole country?!"

"Of course, I think His Excellency Gunter was so agitated, he was crying while dancing in the midst of flying feathers! They say he tore open seven pillows!"

"Heika, when are you going to celebrate this grand event?"

Even that usually silent Captain Saismoya had butted in on the conversation.

Everyone knows..... there's no way for me to turn back anymore....

"Argh.... Pikakos.... Please don't talk about this anymore."

"My humble name is Dakaskos, Heika."

"Oh, right, Dakaskos. This might be public news in our own country, but please don't talk about it here."

"Why're you stopping him from talking about it?! Yuuri! I'm not allowing you to keep it a secret!" (Wolfram XD)

Are you planning on spreading this news everywhere?! Is there anyone who

can tell him for me, we're both boys!?

Murata's reaction was the exact opposite of Flynn's, he didn't look surprised by the news at all. Maybe he had a relative who had that kind of interest.

"Hm.... Don't you sound like you're just hiding something....?" (Murata speaking)

"Murata.... are you my friend or foe?!"

As the speed craft was preparing to leave, a crowd appeared at the harbor. The children were reaching out to touch the ship, they were busy waving their handkerchiefs or shirts, shouting the name of Norman Gilbert simultaneously. There were even people who burst out crying from emotion, it all looked like a grand farewell party, they stayed there for a long time.

The journey on sea was quite alright. Although this was a craft designed for maneuvering through narrow spaces, 'The Red Starfish' still had enough facilities for more than ten people. As it was basically a craft built for war, there were no double beds. Although the three of us (Yuuri, Wolfram, Murata) slept in the Captain's quarters, it was not really comfortable.

Not only were my days spent out on the deck, even my nights were spent in my stargazing. As nearly all our time were spent on deck, we really would have to make winter preparations.

Jozak had concentrated on his beloved woodwork from the very first day; Dakaskos, with his pencil behind his ear, was helping him with the coloring. Maybe Saismoya was not used to spending his time on board someone else's ship, he kept pacing up and down (on deck). Only Flynn spent all her time in her cabin, probably she was worried about leaving the rebuilding of Caloria in the hands of a foreign rescue troop (from Shin Makoku).

However, thinking about the rescue troop from Shin Makoku... it was led by Gisela and made up of many healers. It was definitely better to leave the rescue mission in the hands of experts rather than let someone inexperienced handle it. Flynn would not be wrong to trust me on this.

"It.... It really is quite c....cold." (Murata talking to Yuuri)

"And....and w...w..we'll have to b...b...be careful not to b...bite our t....t...

tongues w...while talking."

As we were moving forward at three times the usual speed, we would have to be prepared to face three times the force (of the wind). The motor of this little craft was in really good condition, the inner portions of the motor had a strange smell. According to local customs, this proved that the magic speed device was functioning properly. If that's the case, why is there the smell of sulfur?

This (the speed device) was the proudly made product of Anissina von Karbelnikoff-kyo, it was definitely different from the other products on the market.

"W...what 's the b....b...bishounen doing?" (Murata speaking)

His voice sounded like the wailing of a ghost.

"Wolf? H...he's t...t...throwing up at t....the other s..s...side of the sh...ship! H... he gets s...seasick v...v...very easily. Ouch!"

"A....actually he's t...t...trying h...his very b...b...best, you know."

Murata was gripping the railings, straightening himself as he faced the sea. His sun-bleached dyed-blonde hair was floating in the wind, revealing his forehead. Thank heavens he wasn't wearing a wig.

"Wolf is t....trying his b...b...best? W...why would h..h...he try his b...best?"

"To help you become a good king."

He was still looking at the ocean.

"I just hope that for all his efforts, he'll get what he really deserves."

After that he looked over to me slowly, blinking while taking out his colored contact lenses.

The two of us have eyes of the same color.

"Who're you?" (Yuuri speaking)

I had my back to the waves, my hands reaching backwards to grip the railings. I could feel the cold steel bars of the railings against my waist, there was no more space for me to back down against anymore. Taking another step back would mean my falling into the ocean, and I didn't plan on doing that.

"Who're you really?!"

"Hey, that's not nice! Shibuya, what're you talking about? We were classmates in the same secondary school...."

"It's not just that, is it?!"

Jozak was looking up from the deck while waving a saw and calling out, "Your Highness, is this alright?" (Jozak is talking to Murata)

"Hm... I'll go and take a look now...."

"Don't go!"

I grabbed at my friend's arm.

His name is Murataken. A bookish classmate from my second and third years in secondary school, and now a scholar in a really famous and distinguished private school. Since he had no girlfriend, to get over his summer holidays quickly, he had been working part time in a shop of his relative's at the beach. It had seemed that way, but.....

It really would have seemed that way, but.....

"What had they meant by 'Your Highness'? Why can you communicate with Jozak when it's the first time you've come to this world?! Is the reason Wolf refuses to respond to your comments due to this title of yours?!"

As my questions burst out from my mouth, I couldn't stop myself anymore.

"And your language! Even if you know a bit of German, it's impossible for you to speak so fluently as soon as you get here?! And don't you feel puzzled when the others call me King or Heika?!"

Murata.... Or at least the person I had thought was Murata, remained silent even when I grabbed his hand. But maybe because of the force exerted by my fingers, his flesh seemed to react slightly (to that force).

"Also.... In Shou Shimaron.... What had you meant on that battlefield? It might be because you're smart, so you could speak glibly about international matters, social problems, or you might just have been reacting to the stressful conditions then."

He had mentioned strange things then.

He had talked about traveling with me, getting lost in the desert lands, escaping pursuers.

"But I don't remember going through those with you! I never saw cacti when I was together with you here, (your mentions of) the sun, the moon, a guardian, I don't understand what you're talking about!"

"That's why I said you might not have remembered isn't it?"

"How could you know about that?! When did you mean? Which desert? Who was my guardian?!"

"It's Weller-kyo."

Hearing the name that I had guessed he would say, my voice was shaking as I asked, "How could you have seen Conrad, Murata....?"

"I never saw him face to face. At the time I had meant, you and I weren't even in human form yet, even our destination hadn't been determined."

Jozak, who had realized something was wrong, had hurried over to poke me lightly with his finger.

"Heika."

He was trying to control me from behind, plucking my fingers off from Murata's arm, one by one. I felt suddenly weak, and had no more will to resist. A wave of nausea came over me, making me collapse backward. I could feel a pair of strong arms holding me back up instantly.

"You're just pretending to help me, actually you're trying to gain control over me and not let me attack him, aren't you?"

"No, Heika, I don't think you'd have attacked him."

"You're all confusing me. Even if you say so.... Murata, he....he has good brains, and he's got the gift of gab.... Plus he's a Japanese, so he's got black hair and eyes. He's not like me, I'm wimpy and useless, unable to perform the duties of a king.... Maybe you're all thinking that it was a mistake to let someone like me become king, so you're trying to find another candidate, that's why you've brought this fellow over here, isn't it?! As I'm impulsive and stubborn, unwilling

to listen to your advice, as long as you can find someone better and more talented than I am, you can switch our places, that's why Murata's here, isn't it?!"

I was repeating what someone (Adalbert) had once told me before, I had almost forgotten them, but I was reproducing them one by one. My head was starting to prickle with heat, even my voice sounded so far away. Actually, it might be because of the humming in my ears that I couldn't hear the noises around me anymore.

My sight was tinged with red, just like a blood pool spreading outwards.

A part of me, which not quite belonged to me, was making me spit out from my mouth, ".....but.....unluckily, he's a Japanese just like me, you can say he's human. I sincerely doubt that he has the Mazoku blood, which you all love, flowing in his veins! Actually the two of us can only count as half-Mazoku!! Even if we're double blacks or if we've dark powers, our bodies are made up of the flesh and blood of filthy humans, not fit for the role of a Maou! Because we're borne from the bodies of despicable human females....."

Suddenly, I felt a force bearing down on me from the left, making me bite down on my inner left cheek. It took me several seconds to realize that I had just been slapped. This kind of situation had happened once before, at that time I had also been slapped, loudly and sharply.

The other (person) was looking back at me blankly; it looked like he wasn't planning on attacking me at the moment.

I was in a similar state (not planning on attacking either), looking silently at the one who had slapped me.

"Insulting someone's parents, that's a despicable act!"

".....Wolf."

"Wasn't that what you had told me before?"

He was looking at me directly with his emerald green eyes which reminded me of calm lake water. My head and the back of my throat felt as if they had been dosed with overly cold mint, it still felt a bit painful.

"....what did I just say to Murata...."

"The exact same thing I said about your parents last time."

I could never forget those words, but I hadn't meant to say all that (to Murata), really. I'm not just stubborn, I'm also impulsive and a coward. No matter from what angle you look at me, I'm not mature or spirited enough. It's easy to see who would be the better leader just by comparision. (Yuuri compared to Murata)

But even so, I never thought that the Mazoku tribe would betray me.

(Thinking of) the relationships we had built from the very beginning, I never thought they would be so heartless.

I'm not wrong (in thinking the Mazoku aren't heartless), am I?

"I'm sorry, Murata."

Gripping something with my right hand to regain my balance, I forced myself to look my friend in the eye. Of course, my face was red (with shame).

"It's alright. We're already high school students, I won't be angry at you over something like this."

"Huh?! But he (Wolfram) lost his temper!?"

The bishounen grabbed at my collar at once.

"Remember, my anger is as explosive as fire! But it seems like you still can't control your own self-inferiority and feelings."

"Wh...what? What self-inferiority and feelings?! And what do you mean by I can't control them?!"

"Thank goodness I knew how to push you by angering you, succeeding in making you propose to me, otherwise I would still be having a one-way crush! Just thought I would mention that."

Putting his hand which he had used to slap me on his hip, he cleared his throat and said confidently, "This is an old Mazoku tradition, I think now you could call it a 'reverse proposal'."

(Explanation on the 'reverse proposal' thingy:

Actually, I feel that Wolfram really slapped Yuuri to open his eyes and regain his senses, stopping him from hurting Murata and Yuuri himself further.

So....I'm thinking that the 'reverse proposal' was just an excuse Wolfram used to lighten up the atmosphere.

The 'reverse proposal' he meant might be that he had purposefully angered Yuuri into slapping him and thus accidentally proposing to him (at the beginning of the novels), but I think it's just his excuse since he probably wasn't feeling anything for Yuuri at that time yet.

Big thanks to miyuchan, ritsu2and lenainverse for the discussion on this part brain is fried)

"Reverse root?" (root and proposal has the same Japanese pronunciation)

What is that thing? Is it the type of root that you dig up after it blooms in spring, then replant the next year? Or is it the last single recorded by my father's favorite band before they split up?

"What? Shibuya, so you were indirectly admitting your feelings?" (Murata speaking)

"Of.... Of course not!"

"Well, at least no harm came from it. But I never thought you would be reluctant to give up your title (as ruler), looks like you're starting to lust after power, but Shibuya....."

"Aah!"

He was examining me like an eye surgeon, flipping my eyelid outwards.

"You don't seem like the type of person unwilling to relinquish power, you know." (Murata speaking)

"Why're you talking like a psychiatrist!?"

"Now is a good time to get things clear. Murata, who're you really?" (still Yuuri)

Jozak was trying to explain in an apologetic tone.

"Heika, actually he is...."

"Excuse me!"

I cut him off abruptly.

"I would like to hear his own explanation."

"If that's the case, we should talk things over in different surroundings."

After undergoing tremors three times repeatedly, the boat's speed had suddenly reduced dramatically. Captain Saismoya came towards us, cupping his hands around his mouth and shouting, "Everyone please go into the cabin! Quickly!"

Wolf was asking, "Do you think that was a giant squid?!" while drawing out his sword. Why does he seem so happy?

"Is there anything wrong?" (Yuuri)

"No, Heika. Do you see what's in front of us?" (Jozak)

Looking towards where Jozak was pointing, I could see the rocky surface protruding from the shore in the distance. There were yellow sails (of ships) flapping in the wind while approaching us.

"It's the shore patrol, nothing to worry about. We were invited by them (Dai Shimaron), remember? Nothing wrong will happen!" (Jozak speaking)

"If that's the case, why do we have to go into the cabin?" (Yuuri speaking)

'The Red Starfish' had almost completely stopped.

Jozak was happily patting Murata and my shoulders. (Jozak is always happy to fight XD)

"Those who get selected for patrolling the sea are mostly really bad-tempered. If something should happen to either of you, we'll get slain by Shinou. But even if there're any problems, they'll only be minor fights, there won't be any real trouble."

To avoid any trouble, it seems that we had better listen to him. I pushed open the cabin door with my foot, tugging at Wolfram's sleeve.

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"Wolf."
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"Come in." (still Yuuri speaking)

He shook his head lightly.

"I'm not planning on going in."

"Huh...?"

Before I could ask him about his reason (for not going in), I had been pushed into the cabin and the door shut in my face.

TBC

Here are my comments, feel free to skip^^.

As I've mentioned before, Yuuri in the novels is quite unlike the one we see in the anime, and it's apparent in this chapter, isn't it?

Just like he did in the last chapter, he can lose control of himself when he's under stress or agitated, unlike in the anime, where he's always the sweet and naïve young king. I always feel that there's still something unresolved about this power of Yuuri's in the novels. He can't really control his powers yet.

That's why I think Wolfram's slap can be summed up in this sentence by Murata: "To help you become a good king."

Yuuri certainly regained his senses quickly enough XD.

Also, it's interesting to note that Wolfram slapped Yuuri for insulting Murata's (and Yuuri's own) *human* mother.....

As for Murata, his character is so much more defined in the novels, I wish they could have showed it more in the anime.

That conversation he had with Yuuri was so....suggestive. And, well, I just have to say it, the dynamics between these three are really interesting, aren't they?

XD

KKM Novel 7, Chapter 4

So I didn't make a post about this novel's chapters that were already translated like I did for KittoMa and ItsukaMa because there really wasn't anything worth making a post about. The Chinese version stayed really faithful. There were a few jokes that were cut out and some that it seems like Vivarina just didn't know how to write in English (Like when Yuuri was imagining Super Saiyans because the Big Shimaron tournament is called the exact same thing as the Dragonball tournament 'Tenkaichi Budokai'). There were also times where it looks like she mixed up who was talking. Although, one time even I'm not really sure if it was Wolfram or Yuuri making the comment. It seems like it

had

to have been Wolfram because the next line was definitely Yuuri, but it also seemed out of character. It wasn't anything really important though so whatever \wedge_{-}

That being said, some of the names are a bit different because they got changed into Chinese phonology. I'll list them at the beginning of the chapter if they come up. The one in this chapter is:

Saismoya > Sizemore

Oh, and I got the picture for this chapter from

Portrait of a Demon King.

Anyway, here it is!

Chapter 4

of Ten ni Ma no Tsuku Yuki ga Mau! (The Ma!Snow Dances in the Sky!)

Chapter 4

"What's up with that!? He's all weak too!"

Annoyed that I'm the only one hiding out, I give the door a light kick. If Conrad were here, his little brother the third son would have been part of the cabin group without complaint. If Conrad were here.

"He's Lord von Bielefelt, right? I don't think he's weak at all."

"There you go again with the know-it-all talk. He's lost to me before, you know. Well, we're saying it was a draw though."

"He probably just underestimated you. There we go!"

He pushes a chair and a desk against the wooden door. He's probably making a simple barricade.

"Hey hold up, Murata. If you do that, then Wolf and the others won't have anywhere to escape."

"They won't retreat. They'll hold their ground outside and defend you to the death."

"To the death? That's a bit much."

"It's just the coastguard so we're probably fine for now."

As he stood by the window watching the scene outside, Murata let out a long sigh.

"Shibuya, you need to get used to being protected."

At that moment, I understood. He had taken out his contact lenses and was a black-eyed owner of Japanese DNA just like me. There was a glitter that I had definitely seen somewhere before in his near-sighted eyes.

"... You know everything, don't you?"

My friend from the same class suddenly looked scarily old. I can't move my gaze away from the dark light in his irises, in his pupils, deep deep within. As I gaze at the pinpoint, numbness runs up from my hipbone.

"You knew... everything... and you kept quiet, didn't you?"

"Stop." Murata hurriedly covers my eyes with his right hand. "It's dangerous. You can't control it on your own yet."

"Control what..."

"Magic. You and I have a very special relationship. Used correctly it can even become a powerful weapon. But it's a double-edged sword. One wrong move can end in tragedy. Do you remember that rampage at the Gilbit estate? That

was really dangerous too."

"Let go!"

I impatiently brush off the hand on my face. It was only for just a brief moment, but the daylight's brightness hurt my eyes.

"What's this about a special relationship... what kind of phrasing is that!? We're friends, aren't we!? We were in the same class in 2nd and 3rd year in middle school, right!? Besides that... before, we were somehow... before we had human bodies we were together and you might have met Conrad... is that true? Is all of that true?"

"It's true. You might not be able to believe it though. You and I... to put it bluntly, the Demon King and I have a special relationship. I am able to aide a king who has great power. I was made for that purpose. But you aren't used to using magic yet. If we mess up while working together, we won't be able to stop the magic from running wild."

The boat isn't shaking, but I can't properly pronounce my first words.

"Uh, um, in a video game that would be a tag-team combo?"

"Hey, that's a nice way of putting it."

It wasn't the time for me to be praised for confirming the name of the technique.

Murata even knew that I was the Demon King. If he had happened to get caught up with me and just unluckily got brought to this world then he wouldn't know that fact.

"... Maybe it's because my brain isn't calm right now... but you sound like you're a human from this world. Maybe not a human. A demon maybe. Either way, Ken Murata from Japan, a classmate from my hometown, was really someone from The Great Demon Kingdom! ... Is what it sounds like."

"It's something like that."

With his arms loosely folded across his chest, he's leaning against the wall. Half of his body is in view of the window and only that part was obstructing the sunlight.

"... Who are you?"

He looked black with the light behind him.

"Who are you? Murata? You're not Murata are you!? You're not the Ken Murata I know! I mean, demons don't have that kind of name. Wolf is Lord von Bielefelt and Conrad is Lord Weller. Gwen is Lord von Voltaire and Lady Celi is Lady von Spitzweg and Miss Anissina is Lady von Karbelnikoff. Josak is... Gurrier. What are you? Who are you really? You're certainly not Muraken. You don't have that Japanese name."

"I

said so, didn't I? I'm Ken Murata. I'm not anyone else."

"There's no one with that name in The Great Demon Kingdom!"

"Then who are you?"

After getting answered with another question, I'm at a loss for words for a moment.

"Your Majesty, aren't you Yuuri Shibuya? Aren't you a baseball fanatic who lived on Earth as a Japanese high school student right up until just before your 16th birthday? Aren't you Yuuri Shibuya, the owner, catcher and captain of a grass-lot baseball team and a Lions fan? Even if you ask me who I am, I am me and there's nothing false or true about it. I lived on Earth for 16 years too. I lived as a perfectly normal Japanese person with relatively ordinary parents even though they work a lot so there are days when I don't see them at all. I was in a different school district so our elementary schools were different, but we were in the same class in middle school, right? I was born with the name Ken Murata. I don't have any middle names or baptismal names. I was there for almost 16 years. I breathed the same air and was raised in the same world. You wanna hear more? We go to the same bookstores and convenience stores and we take a shortcut through the same park. As a matter of fact, the ramen shop I went to after cram school in 6th grade was the same too. Is that enough? Can you be satisfied with that? If you ask me who I am now, all I can tell you is that I'm me!"

"But you..."

My voice is high-pitched. I felt like the floor under my feet would disappear and

I would just plunge into the ocean.

"... you said stuff about a cactus and a journey... Even though we breathed the same air for sixteen years, you're talking about stuff I don't understand. You're saying stuff that a high school student leading a normal life wouldn't ever imagine, wouldn't ever wonder about."

"Yeah. That's, it's a little extra something I remember from before being born."

"... The thing about Conrad too?"

"Yes."

He was the man who brought my soul to Earth and even named me. But he's not by my side. He caused me all this anxiety and he won't come back.

"He embraced your soul and went to Earth and protected you with great care on the journey. Until it was decided where you would be born. My guardian was a ridiculous doctor, but he brought along Lord Weller, who didn't know anything about Earth, and tried surprisingly hard. You had a slightly troublesome pursuer and he needed to get away from them."

"Pursuer?"

"Yeah, because you were the soul of the next Demon King."

What do you have to do to remember what happened before you were born? I heard on TV that babies have memories from inside the womb, but what he's talking about is from before we even existed. We weren't embryos or even eggs and sperm. These are memories from when we were incomprehensible beings.

"There's no way I'd remember that."

"That's right. It's erased. The previous existence and memories of the former owner of a soul are sealed in a gap in the soul. All souls without exception are storing up the memories of the 'lives' it has lived up to that point, but usually the door to them won't open. They'll get in the way of living your life. It's fine to just use the knowledge gained in the current 'life' and only use that. However, I'm different."

The guy who insists he is Ken Murata squints his black eyes a little.

"... I remember. I can't forget. I'm not allowed to forget."

"F-forget what? Your past life and before that?"

"Yeah, and even before

that

. Way back... yeah, way back."

"I'm sorry. I can't really unders..."

To be honest, I can't really understand his explanation. He has memories from when he lived before? Is that like when girls get all excited about their fortunes being told and they say that they were a princess of a Daimyo during the Warring States Period? They're always some high-class daughter and someone else is always some queen of a foreign country. There are a bunch of people all across Japan that were Marie Antoinette and there are probably a few hundred people across the world who are the reincarnation of Napoleon Bonaparte. There are some reserved people who say that they were rocks and for some reason that leaves a favorable impression. But I've never heard of anyone talking about even before their past life. I have a feeling I saw something like that on an ESP television show, but even that was only two or three generations back in time at the most. How long is 'way back?'

"Hey, um, when you say way back, does that mean about 500 years?"

"A little more."

"Then 800, 1000 years?"

"No, well, about 4000 years."

"Seriously? Then you remember all of the past 4000 years of Chinese history!?"

"Shibuya~~!" he yells out in an exasperated yet amused voice. "I wasn't a Chinese citizen all 4000 years, you know." (1)

"If you weren't in China then where were you? Did you wander around the world?"

"Hm, well various places. But before me was a woman living in Hong Kong and before that was a military surgeon in France. The owner before that was... um, well they died young so they didn't really have an occupation. They died in an accident before they were ten... don't make such a sad face."

I had inadvertently imagined it and was on the verge of tears.

"But, but you, ten years old is so sad... there was a lot of things you wanted to do, wasn't there?"

"Hey wait, I wasn't the one who died," Murata said as he unfolded his arms and pounded his chest with his fist. "It was the previous previous previous owner of this soul who died."

I stood there forgetting to close my mouth. Like I can understand a crazy story like that. I gave up just with past lives and souls and now he's talking about it not being himself but an owner. Your previous previous previous previous life isn't you? It's hard to believe you can lead a happy life carrying the lives of people who aren't you.

"How can I explain it in an easier way? For example, it's kind of like remembering the main characters you empathized with in a few dozen movies. Ah, World War I was pretty difficult wasn't it? The railroad engineer had a pretty wife, didn't he? It's really great we have a cure for the bubonic plague nowadays, huh? That kid really admired the Crusaders... and like that, I accurately remember the portrayals of main characters from movies from a bunch of different eras. So, it's not like I have gone through anything sad or painful myself. Even though I have 4000 years of memories, I've only lived sixteen years. I might cry over the pain of others or for disasters sometimes, but there's nothing on par occurring in my own life. Hey Shibuya, you paying attention?"

"Who...."

No, not 'who are you.' Do people with memories of their past lives talk about them like that? Murata is surprisingly objective. What century were the Crusaders from? I regret that I failed world history.

"But you know, 4000 years... do you remember Cleopatra's movie?"

"I

saw the one with Elizabeth Taylor. But during Cleopatra's time, the owner of this soul lived in the land of the demons."

"In The Great Demon Kingdom!? They were there!?"

"It seems so. At that time, the name of the country was..." Murata lapsed into thought for a short while as if he was remembering something like in a scene in an old drama. "Yeah, it has been here before."

It's extremely... an extremely strange feeling.

When I first came to this world, a spiteful American Football Macho used an iron claw on me. Thanks to that, the accumulated knowledge of the language stored in that gap in my soul came out. I found out that the previous owner of my soul was someone who lived in The Great Demon Kingdom. They lived as a demon in that country before I was Yuuri Shibuya.

After forgetting all of that, I lived in Japan for 16 years and made dozens of friends and acquaintances. Now, one of those people I was close with is confessing to me that they also have memories from The Great Demon Kingdom.

"It's a really strange... odd feeling. Having a friend that I can't clearly associate with either Japan or here..."

"That's understandable. Even I was a confused at first. When I first found out that I could share this secret in this life, I was both happy and afraid at the same time. It had been a secret for so long, you see. Actually if I, as a child, told people that I had memories of a past life they'd call me a liar. I've kept quiet about it all my life. So even when I first met you I was apprehensive about whether you would realize the truth in the future. Who would have thought that the soul that Lord Weller brought was living so close? I mean, you and I were born in Boston and Hong Kong respectively and Japan is a large country from north to south. It was really weird that two people with a common secret would be living so close to each other. But then again..."

Oh, Murata was born in Hong Kong. I heard that his parents are Japanese though.

After discovering all of these shocking things, my consciousness was getting hazy even though it wasn't nighttime. For some reason I'm really sluggish and tired. I want to escape from reality into a dream.

have the important mission of assisting you, His Majesty the 27th Demon King."

"... Mission? Then you're trying to help me?"

"I'll be happy if I can. The reason I have the vast knowledge from the time I was called The Great Sage is to help you."

"I

see, The Great..."

I haven't eaten or drank anything, but there's a round lump stuck in the back of my throat. After struggling and coughing for a bit, I realize that it's air. I was so amazed I forgot to exhale the air I breathed in. Saliva went down the wrong pipe and my nose was burning.

"Geh, The, The Great Sage!?"

"Are you okay, Shibuya? You want me to get some water?"

That's right. In the first demon castle I visited, Blood Pledge Castle, I had seen a portrait of him.

The Twin Black Great Sage. The sole person in this world who stood on equal ground with The True King. It is said that if it weren't for him, the demons would have lost in the battle against the Originators and would have been forced to wander without land or country.

He was the Asian-looking man drawn with a gentle expression standing a few steps behind the beautiful young king that looked a lot like Wolfram. He was more intelligent looking than beautiful and only his black eyes and hair were the same as mine.

"You're that Great...

cough

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... Sage... guy!?"
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"No, like I said I'm just plain old Murata now."

As soon as Josak had called him Your Highness I should have realized that he was someone of a high position. As a baseball brat who had bad grades in

language class, 'Your Highness' was something I'd never heard before. I probably wouldn't have been able to read it without furigana and if you asked me to write it, it would have been impossible. I don't even know how to use the word. (2)

I don't know why everyone else besides me realized this, but facing The Great Sage, a patriotic hero, a founding father (mother?) of the nation, a former Crown Prince wouldn't be able to defy him. The reason the spoiled prince was taking out all of his frustration on me was because Murata had too high of a status.

"Tha-wh-what's up with that? Then for the time being, I'll just tack 'Lord' onto your name and call you Lord Murata."

"Stop that, I haven't done anything to deserve that! I just have the memories of that person!"

"... But, then that means that you're a lot more knowledgeable about this world than I am."

"I

wouldn't say 'a lot more.' For me, this is my first experience here in my entire life and the relations between humans and demons have changed a lot since their

time. With this old language and these old memories, this is a strange and unknown place for Ken Murata."

"Even so, you were tricking me..."

"I

wasn't tricking you."

"But you didn't tell me. You even made an excuse that you could speak German when you were communicating that first time. When you met Flynn and American Football Macho, you were pulling that half-baked deception that you were misunderstanding everything... All of that was to trick me. That means you lied to me on purpose without any remorse."

I slowly slumped down on the floor and leaned against the foot of the desk. The floorboards shifted under my weight and the door creaked lightly.

"And not just in this world. In Japanese high school life too. While we played baseball on the weekends, when you brought me to the dolphin show, when you invited me to work at the beach, all that time you knew, didn't you? And then when I drowned at the dolphin pool you pretended to actually be worried."

"1

was

worried!"

"It's too late for that now! You knew where I went and what I was going through. So what was all that with 'it seemed like you might have gotten washed out to the sea wall?' Agh, I don't know what to think anymore!"

"Listen to me! I was worried. Even if I knew that you were a demon, it's not like I was able to come with you until now. No,

because

you were going to be king, I was even more worried about whether you'd get there safely."

"Shut up. It's just a whole bunch of lies."

All this time. I had just been told some weird things by the person I thought was my normal friend. In a way it was even more intense than when I came to this world on a Star Tours and was first told about my situation.

Surrounded by a bunch of beautiful people I had never met before and being told that I was the Demon King starting today was so shocking I had nightmares because of it. But the reason I was able to accept that was because everything was so bizarre. Because everything here was so incredibly different than the world that I was raised in, I was able to sort out all of the new information.

But this time someone who was my normal friend up until yesterday is talking about kings and sages. Up until a little while ago, Murata was my classmate from middle school and now he's the reincarnation of a national hero.

It's hard to believe, but it's different than just accepting new information and filing it away.

Someone who I believed had been my friend for a long time has been lying to

me.

"I

wasn't trying to trick you. I just didn't say anything. I couldn't say anything."

"That means you were tricking me! Of course you can speak the language! You're this world's greatest Lord Sage! Demons and humans... and even that box, of course you know more about them than anyone else. Compared to me who had no interest in the occult or psychic phenomenon until I was 15, who didn't really know anything about science fiction or fantasy or religion, who, who didn't even read all that much, of course you know far,

far

more about them than I do! Even though you knew... I idiotically..."

"Shibuya."

I wave my left hand at Murata who seems to be a bit flustered and tilted my head. I'm so incredibly miserable I can't even sit up straight anymore.

"Whatever, I don't care. There's no point in getting this angry. It's just... I felt like I had to protect you somehow because you didn't know anything about this world, because you didn't know that Japanese black hair and eyes were dangerous... because you only had me... it's like I was being an idiot. No, not 'like,' I was being a genuine, bona-fide idiot... damn it, I'm so stupid... I'm such a joke."

"I

won't laugh. I'm thankful."

I feel like crying now. If I wasn't so tired I would have already been wailing a long time ago. I'd have grabbed a plate or a book or a pillow or anything I could reach and thrown it at him.

I'm embarrassed that I got all worked up by myself and I felt like screaming 'You idiot!' and running away. I wanted to run somewhere far away and never see Murata again. I wonder what he was thinking when I was going along with him so he wouldn't figure out that this wasn't Earth and when I was trying so hard to hide my identity and position.

How much did he laugh at me?

"There's no way I would laugh. I was really thankful. I felt bad because you were being such a good person. I felt guilty because I couldn't tell you about myself. I thought it would be better if you could go on without ever knowing. If things could stay the way they were and everything would resolve itself without me having to get involved, if you could go on without ever noticing... I thought that might be better."

On the other side of the window that I absently glanced at, the 'skirmish' (according to Josak) was about to happen. No one had drawn their swords, but it was hard to call the situation calm.

"I

mean, I didn't have any confidence. It's been a really long time since my soul went to Earth. Compared to you who was just in The Great Demon Kingdom as a woman, I've been reincarnated elsewhere for a really long time. While I was being born in various countries, there have been a few people I've confessed the truth to – that I had memories from my past lives. That I had memories from over 2000 years ago from another world."

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"... And?"

His sigh turned into a laugh.

"I

got treated like a sick person."

2000 years
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was

a little hard to believe. If it was a hundred years, he might have gotten treated like a god, but people can't really imagine such a long span of time. For example, unless someone had experienced it for themselves, it would be hard to just believe that someone got flushed down a public toilet.

"Even worse was when I was called a devil. Ah, that time was really bad. I almost got burned at the stake."

"B-burned at the stake..?"

"Anyway, after going through experiences like that so many times, I realized it wasn't smart to talk about the truth. Not to anyone, not to my parents, and of course not even to my friends. Not even to you... I was hesitating... over whether it was alright to tell you... right up until now. But I thought if, as my last excuse, if you... if you confessed to me then I would confess too."

Confess what?

"I

wanted to hear it from you, but unfortunately you never confessed."

"Confess what? You don't mean... you don't mean coming out about travelling to a different world? You think I can just say something ridiculous to a Japanese friend like I'm the Demon King starting today!? No one would believe tha-ah."

"Yeah, it's ridiculous. No one would believe it."

That's right. I couldn't tell Murata either. No one wants their family and friends to think they're weird. I put my head back against the leg of the chair I'm leaning on. Then I slowly fold my knees and stand up with a short grunt.

"We're sixteen, after all."

"Yeah."

"Hmph."

"What?"

When I playfully gave his shoulder a push, Murata pushed my shoulder back. With the same strength.

In the same spot.

It's the situation where guys would embrace and hug each other in a coming of age movie. But neither of us will do those kind of exaggerated things in a situation like this. We're Japanese after all.



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"... I'm the Demon King."
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"Yeah."

"Even though I was born in Boston and raised in Japan, the soul I have is a demon's and I was raised to become the Demon King. It's funny, isn't it?"

"A little bit."

"History, management, stuff like that? How to be a king? No one taught me anything like that. When it comes to stuff I know there's baseball... ping pong and baseball. Forget college, I hadn't even gone to high school for that long. But all of a sudden I'm the ruler of a country. I have to govern over hundreds of thousands of people. It's crazy, isn't it?"

"It is."

"What about you?"

Murata once again explains his position in a way that a high school student who only reads sports magazines and manga could understand. As I chimed in with 'right?' and 'that sucks' every now and again, it was like we were chatting in front of a convenience store cheering each other up. Eventually we ended up bragging about which one of us had a harder time, but neither one of us came out on top.

Because neither of us felt that there was anything unfortunate about the parts of our lives we didn't talk about.

Right now, I'm talking about demons with my Japanese best friend from Earth. We're talking about the road of fate we're stumbling down like we're discussing a drama. At the opening ceremony of the second year of middle school, I never imagined I'd have this kind of relationship with Murata. Suddenly a warm feeling pours into my chest, spreads throughout my veins and reaches all the way to my fingertips. The reassurance that there was someone I could talk about everything with spread throughout my body.

But at the same time, I had cut off my one remaining, although narrow, escape route.

"... But it's all real, isn't it."

```
"Hm?"
```

"1

just thought that this is now beyond a doubt all real."

Until now, I had met friends in a place that no one knew about and was the king of a country that no one had heard of. The only proof I had was the Lion's Blue pendant swaying on my chest. If I had been surrounded by a bunch of doctors in a pure white hospital room in Japan on Earth and they told me that it was all a dream, that it was all an illusion that I had seen, I wouldn't have had the confidence to defend myself.

But now it's different.

I have companions in this world and there is a friend who knows this on Earth.

This is definitely real.

No one can doubt it.

"I

can't just explain it all away by saying it's a dream... ah, huh?"

On the other side of the window pane, a silver flash cut through the air. It was the flash of steel. There's only one thing I imagine it could be: someone had drawn their sword. Hurriedly looking out the window, I see that even Flynn has appeared on deck.

"This is bad. Something's up."

Five men in yellowish beige work clothes have come on board from the coast guard ship. The one who drew his sword is a young man in the rear who seems to be an underling and looked like the least flexible of the bunch. The others were grinning at Flynn rather than Sizemore and Josak.

When we stop talking and listen carefully, we hear that they were talking about the law in Shimaron and asking about who was responsible for the woman.

"Ugh, those guys are going on about some other stiff thing. What's wrong with a wife representing her husband?"

"What are you going to do?"

"It's obvious. It's times like these that we 'Let's Norman Gilbit!' It was really lucky for us that he was a masked man." (3)

I noisily pushed the desk and moved the simple barricade. I roughly turn the doorknob, but it will only twist a little in one direction.

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"Huh, that's weird. Did I lock the door...?"
"I
```

said it before." Murata holds out a bit of metal in his right hand. It's a small, bronze key. His cheeks and the corners of his mouth are lifted in a slightly exasperated way. "You have to get used to being protected."

"But they're saying that they're not going to let us through because Flynn is a woman! It's nothing all that dangerous. I just have to make an appearance with Norman's mask on and arrange for us to go on."

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"No."

"Ugh, really!?"
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I put my foot on the door and twist the doorknob with all my might, but it's definitely not going to open any time soon. Giving up and running to the window, I grab the frame and try and lift it up. It.won't.go.up. Just like the door, this one is securely locked as well.

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"Murata!"
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"No. If you absolutely need to get out there then strike me down and take the key! Ah, I wanted to say something cool like that."

He doesn't look prepared for something like that at all. After hesitating for three seconds, I groan and grab the back of the chair.

"Aw, I was looking forward to playing a game where I go 'I've never even been hit by my father!"

"It's easier to throw around furniture than to hit a friend."

It also feels a lot better.

The leg of the simply designed chair smashes the thick glass loudly. Perfect,

I've always wanted to do this kind of classroom mayhem. However, the sturdy wooden frame was still there and there wasn't a space I could fit my body through. Even if I kick or throw my shoulder into it, it won't break.

An agitated conversation flows in along with the cold and damp ocean air. The phrase 'by force' is mixed in there. Everyone, calm down. And before that, me, calm down. There's a keyhole in the center of the window frame, but it doesn't look like it will break if I hit it with my hands.

"... If you really are my best friend Murata," the bronze key is sitting on his right hand's index finger. "Then you wouldn't tell me to keep my head down because I'm a king! I don't know about the Twin Black Great Sage though."

"And there you go again without any proof..."

"Muraken would do this: he'd laugh and lift his head like this."

Murata did just that. He dropped his gaze to the floor with a defeated expression as he played with the key with his fingertips. Then he gave a small laugh and lifted his head.

"I

thought it would turn out like this."

That's probably a phrase from someone else that he heard before he was born. (4)

He tossed the key over and it flashed red. It comes flying at me in an arc over the short, 50 centimeter distance between us that I could have reached across.

I mutter a thank you, hold down my impatience and open the window. The glass fragments scatter around, but I can't worry about trivial injuries.

"Shibuya, the mask."

"Oops."

I pulled the tight mask over my head and tied the leather cord. I put one foot on the window frame and stick out the top half of my body.

"Wait, all of you!"

Everyone's gaze is immediately drawn to me. Murata murmurs behind me as I

pitch forward out of the window.

"... You should have used the door."

The Great Sage was absolutely right.

- (1) At this point in the story, you're supposed to have already put two and two together that Murata was born in Hong Kong and his previous life was a woman named Christine who also lived in Hong Kong because of what happened in 'All's Well that Ends Well' in the gaiden KakkaMa that came out between novels 4 and 5. Or at the very least, be suspicious of that fact~ It was made fairly obvious in the last novel when Murata started talking about their guardians. Everything that Murata has been saying regarding Conrad and Jose is from that side story. Maybe I should have translated that first... But it's really long! XD I promise I'll get to translating that eventually!!
- (2) Furigana! So, Japanese has three different writing systems, two phonological and one logographic. Logographic means that one character can represent a word or morphemes. Basically, the dreaded kanji! Furigana are phonological characters written on top of or on the side of kanji like a little cheat sheet when a publisher/writer thinks their intended audience might not be able to read the kanji they have used. Your Highness (geika) looks like this:

猊下.

- (3) The 'Let's Norman Gilbit' here was in English ^-^
- (4) This is what Conrad said all the time.

That's the end of the chapter! There was really

a lot

of information in this one. Super interesting read ^-^

Next Chapter -->

Tags: kkm translation, novel 7

Current Location: Home!

Current Mood: apathetic

Current Music: Kanpekigu no ne

KKM Novel 7, Chapter 5

<-- Previous Chapter

Can Greta be any more adorable? Seriously.

So anyway, I decided to just keep Shinzoku as Shinzoku and define the term in the text because any name I came up with sounded weird ^-^;;

There was another name in this chapter different from the Chinese > English version:

Donierson > East Nilzon

Oh, and once again I got the picture for this chapter from

Portrait of a Demon King.

Chapter 5

Poison Lady Anissina and the 'Corsit' of Instinct (1)

At night she may be Poison Lady Anissina who wanders about graveyards, but during the day she is in Working Woman 'Moad.' Poison Lady Anissina is amazing when she 'chainges' into this 'moad.' She does math at the speed of sound and speaks at the speed of light. No one can hear what she says. She is undefeated!

Watch out! The greasy fingers of her male boss are on Poison Lady Anissina's back! This is 'sekshual harasmint'!

Gyaaaaa! It was the echoing scream of the male boss. The sharp, bared teeth of the 'corsit' swooped down upon the man's fingers.

Closing the book she was reading, Greta lifts her chin.

"Hey Anissina, what's a 'corsit'?"

"It is part of a woman's underwear. However, in our kingdom it is not used as underwear but as support for the lower back and spine. And also, Greta, is it not 'Instinct' but 'Desires.' Poison Lady Anissina and the Corset of Desires." (2)

"Hm, then what's 'sekshual harasmint'?"

"It is when someone bothers you based on your sex. It is subtly different from Haley Joel Osment." (3)

"Who's that!? A guy!?" Finding an opportunity to use the comeback she had learned, the child swung her feet delightedly.

"He seems to be an actor that His Majesty likes. In any case," whipping around her flaming red hair tied high up on her head, Lady Anissina von Karbelnikoff places both of her hands on the desk. Her light blue eyes were shining with well-founded confidence and brimming with the spirit of experimentation. "Now that His Majesty's safety has been verified, you have to catch up on your studies as soon as possible. When our beloved Majesty returns, he will certainly be disappointed if you were completely off track." (4)

"I know."

After blinking her long eyelashes a few times, the little girl once again opens the thick book. It was written to be read aloud to others so the contents were amusing and drew people in. However, there were a few words that a child of about ten could not understand.

"But what sort of thing is 'sekshual harasmint'?"

"What sort of thing..." Lady von Karbelnikoff was, at this very moment, in a very serious situation in regards to child rearing.

The first lesson in sex education.

A proper sex education for women was exceedingly important. If possible, it would be best if it was a coordinated effort between the parents and the educators at both home and school so that it can proceed at a natural pace. In this situation, Anissina was neither Greta's parent nor teacher and she had no obligation to explain in detail.

However, with the aforementioned parents (the unique couple of His Majesty and the Spoiled Prince) and the educator (who is most likely Real Günter while she is in this kingdom) in the situations they were now in, it is likely impossible for a proper sex education to be coordinated. On the contrary, it was not unthinkable that that lot would try and tell a happy fairytale about babies being carried by flying skeletons and being thrown into cabbage patches. It is

impossible to grow once you have false knowledge.

On this one occasion, The Red Devil will extend a helping hand.

"To start off, I will explain about the stamens and pistils of rafflesia."

This is going to take a while.

"I know about that already. Mr. Shiny and his wife already told me how children are born."

Poison Lady Anissina suffers a small shock. Hyscliff's household was quite open in this way.

"That's not what I meant. I wanted to know what kind of things become that. Is it 'harasmint' when Yuuri gives me a biiiig hug? It makes me happy, though."

"That is an expression of love. There is

nothing wrong with that."

"Then what about when Wolf gives Yuuri a biiiig hug?"

"That is also, in a way, an expression of love. There is

nothing wrong with that."

"Then what about when Wolf teases Yuuri and calls him a wimp?"

"As long as the part before 'imp' is a 'w' it is alright."

'L' is a no-no. (5)

"Okay, so then what about when you pounce on Gwen from behind and tie his arms behind his back?"

"That is a capture. There is

absolutely

nothing wrong with that."

The sound of quick footsteps and a trailing scream come echoing from the other end of the long hall.

"Ahhhhhhhhh!"

With his waist-length hair trailing behind him parallel to the floor,

Real

Lord Günter von Christ runs past them. The hems of his long pants are rolled all the way up and even his thighs are completely exposed.

"His Highness! His Highness is----!"

He ran past the open door with a speed that surpassed the wind. Before that thought could even pass their minds, His Excellency Lord Gwendal von Voltaire, face red, rushed after him screaming as well.

"I'M TELLING YOU NOT TO SCREAM ABOUT IT!"

... Anissina turns on her magic-powered water heater.

"Spring has come."

"Yeah, it's springtime."

- (1) Here we go with the Harry Potter titles again! This one is a pun on
- Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire
 - . The Japanese title is

Harry Potter to Honoo no Goburetto.

Anissina's book is titled

Poison LadyAnissina to Honnou no Corusetto.

ALSO, this is Greta reading so some words are misspelled on purpose because Greta's not the best reader yet.

- (2) Instinct is 'Honnou' and Desires is 'Bonnou.'
- (3) Haley Joel Osment is an actor. Most people know him as the kid in The Sixth Sense. He does the voice of Sora in Kingdom Hearts too~ Anyway, 'sexual harassment' in Japanese is actually a borrowed phrase from English so it is written as 'sekushuaru harasumento.' Normally this is shortened to 'seku hara.' So, the end part '-shuaru harasumento' sounds a little like 'Joel Osment' in Japanese --> 'joeru osumento'.

(4) More puns. In Japanese conversation, it's not uncommon to say someone's name instead of 'you.' Anissina actually says 'When our beloved Majesty returns, he will certainly be disappointed if Greta were completely off track.' Greta in Japanese phonology becomes 'Gureta.' The word (+ conjugation) for 'to go off track' Anissina uses here is '

gurete

itara' so it's a small joke. Extra info: 'Gureta' by itself is the past form of the verb.

(5) OMG I LOVE WHEN JOKES JUST WORK! So, this joke is actually almost EXACTLY THE SAME IN JAPANESE. It's really exciting. Anyway, explanation: The word Wolfram uses for wimp all the time is 'henachoko.' So, the original went as such: As long as the next part after 'henyachi' is 'yoko' it is alright. 'N' is a no-no. 'Henyachin' is a Japanese word for limp penis. And, because of how the Japanese writing system works, putting a small 'yo' after a 'chi' makes it 'cho' so it would be Henyachoko<--->Henachoko. (Although, I will take this opportunity to tell you all that 'henachoko' doesn't actually mean wimp even though that's what the fandom has made it (which is also why I translate it as wimp). It actually means 'novice/rookie' so in a way Wolfram is actually calling Yuuri a n00b all the time, not a wimp.)

....*

The largest ocean port in the mainland of Big Shimaron, East Nilzon, was decorated in cheerful colors. All of the buildings were painted a vivid white and yellow and the roof tiles and street pavement were a warm ocher. A lot of the ships returning to port were painted white as well and it was instantly apparent which ships were from other countries.

Most of the people's hair was light brown with the occasional golden brown and chestnut mixed in. Just like the emissaries sent to Caloria, the soldiers all had long hair flowing in the wind.

I headed to Flynn's cabin to tell her that we arrived.

Ever since Flynn had suffered the sexist attitudes of the Shimaron coast guards who told her that they would not allow her to travel the seas without a man to

claim responsibility for her, she had secluded herself in her room. However, what shocked her even more was that I resolved the troublesome situation by appearing in disguise with Norman Gilbit's mask.

In the extremely short version, I simply said this: "All of you, you should bet on Caloria instead of Big Shimaron. You'll make enough money to run wild for the rest of your lives." The bunch of ruffians that were serving as the coast guard laughed and let the ship by. They'll probably bet on Big Shimaron in The World's Best Fighter Tournament, but maybe they'll buy one betting slip on Caloria.

Simply because the one earnestly thinking about her country is a woman, she's laughed at and rejected, but with just one idiotic phrase like that from a man we get let right through.

To be honest, it's depressing.

"Flynn, don't pay any attention to that ridiculous law. It's time to-"

"AH!" With a shrill scream like an old lady, she throws her bed sheets. "How dare you enter a woman's room without asking for permission!"

"... Did you just hide something?"

"I-I didn't hide anything. Hurry up and get out. I'm in the middle of changing."

Despite what she just said, she already has her jacket on. None of her luggage is open either. She's pushing the door closed with all her strength, but over her shoulder I see a bulge under the bed sheet she threw.

"You're hiding someone in your bed, aren't you!?"

"I'm not hiding anyone. There's no one here!"

"Liar, look, the sheets are shaking. You're smuggling someone on board! What, is he your boyfriend? If so you should have just said so from the begin-"

"KYA! No! It's not my boyfriend!"

"D-don't tell me you wished on a monkey paw to bring your dead husband back to life and started a horror story!" (1)

"Who's a monkey!?"

Then, the sheets moved.

Thinned by over-washing, the sheets rose up in a showy fashion with a narration by Sadatomo Matsudaira. (2)

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"Nmo?"

"Huh?"

A pink nose suddenly poked out.

Why a sheep!? Why T-Zou!?

"See I told you. It's not a lover or my husband."
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Giving up on trying to push me out, Flynn reluctantly let go of the doorknob. As if staying still was pushing her to the limit, the ball of 100% Wool jumped up and down on the bed. Easily finding me, she rushed at me from a dangerous angle.

"Ooph! Settle down T-Zou! Sit! I said sit! Why did you bring her along again?"

"If I left her in Caloria, what would we do if she was mistaken for food..."

"Eh? But lamb meat... I guess you eat that, huh?"

This sheep who was brown only on the T-Zone of her face was rubbing her face and horns on my stomach. She's very excited.

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"And besides-"
"Nmonmonmonmoshkashteeeeee!
```

"That's ridiculous. This is 'Use your knowledge, speed and skill to win! The World's Best Fighter Tournament' isn't it? Where is there any place to squeeze in a sheep? Now-"

"Nmoshkashteee!"

"-might come in handy."

"-were to be of use... let's see, ah, it would only be her being warm if we slept outside?"

It seemed like Flynn did not want to leave T-Zou behind on the ship as she was doing her best to contradict me.

"But wha-"

"Aaaanmoshkashteeee!"

"-the final match is a sheep show? What will you do then? You won't find a valiant and fluffy girl like this just anywhere."

At the very least the sheep is living up to her description.

Thrusting my fingers into the high-class furball, I scratch behind her ears. There's no way that the last event in an international tournament that occurs once every four years is going to be a livestock show. What's strange is that Flynn, a human from Caloria, did not know the details of the tournament. Even though Caloria is a territory of Small Shimaron it has the qualifications to enter so it wouldn't be strange if she knew what sorts of contests are involved.

"You said you'd never participated, but you don't even know what's involved? Isn't it broadcast on TV or the radio... no guess not. But you have something like newspapers right? And besides, you're the wife of a feudal lord so wouldn't you be invited as a guest?"

"Of course not! Women and children are not allowed in the arena. If they are found there they are put to death. If you're not a... natural-born Shimaron citizen you can't watch the finals."

"Fh?"

I suddenly had a mental image. A stadium filled to capacity and overflowing with spectators, all of which are handsome adult men. Resounding and bold cheers with indecent jeers and jokes mixed in. The winner is embraced by an older man and receives his blessings, the loser is dragged from the stadium by another older man. There are angry roars following him out and rotten eggs are thrown at him.

It's passionate, too passionate. And cold... filthy, too filthy!

"According to rumor, those who make it to the finals fight naked with only their bodies as weapons, their tempered bodies clash together, the glistening sweat and all sorts of bodily fluids fly through the air all the way to the spectator seats-"

"Hold up! That's really like the old Olympics! Someone should have told me that sooner!"

This is bad. Really bad.

Do I really stand a chance with my lame pecs..? Ah this sucks! I'm gonna look so bad in comparison.

In the first place, the bodies of baseball players are fundamentally different compared to other sports, especially martial arts. Muscles like Kiyohara has are the exception and there are a surprising amount of players with soft body types. Wait a minute, if we're talking about a face like Matsui's then he might win. But hold up, it'll probably take at least five more years for me to get a body like Kazuo. (3)

"... I doooon't waaaanna enter anymoooore!"

"Are you okay? Are you going to start doing sit-ups?"

That's like starting a diet the day before getting weighed. No matter what sort of dangerous doping I did, there's no way I'd get muscles overnight.

"What are the two of you doing alone tog-... What's wrong Yuuri? Your eyebrows are all wimpy," Wolfram says as he rushes in. For a moment he forgets his anger.

"Naked... Wolf... naked in front of a stadium full of people..."

As he watched me mutter dazedly, the pretty boy boasted proudly – even though he was supposed to be all spoiled and high-strung.

"What are you so depressed for? It's nothing to worry about! It's something that all men go through at some point. If all the spectators are naked too then it will just be a naked festival. Maybe everyone at the arena will come together and have a huge party."

Everyone at the arena will... bleagh!

"Stop imagining the details!" I yell.

"Um, I'm sure this isn't the case, but do you really intend to go all the way to the finals..?" Flynn nervously interjects as she pets T-Zou. "Why are you asking something obvious like that now?"

It means something to participate in the Olympics, but there is a greater meaning in victory in The World's Strongest.

(1) Reference to

The Monkey's Paw

by William Wymark Jacobs. It is a short story about a married couple and their son who come into possession of a monkey's paw that grants three wishes, but the wishes come true in horrible ways.

- (2) This is a joke involving the previous sentence. Sadatomo Matsudaira is an announcer for the public broadcasting network, NHK. He was the host for a show that ran from 2000-2007 called 'Sono Toki Rekishi ga Ugoita' which means 'Then, history moved.'
- (3) These are baseball players. Kazuhiro Kiyohara and Kazuo Matsui were both in Yuuri's favorite team, the Seibu Lions. Here's a spoiler to their pictures:

[Spoiler to pics]





....*

We found an adequate spot in the middle of the crowded harbor and just barely managed to dock The Red Starfish. According to the rules of the sea, we flew this country's flag in a conspicuous location. Nevertheless, bright red ships seem to be rare so we were immediately identified as foreigners.

When I headed up to the deck to disembark, Captain Sizemore came up to me without making a sound and handed me a small parcel.

"Your Majesty, His Excellency Gwendal instructed me to give this to you..."

"Gwen did? What is it? A knitted hat?"

I untie the ribbon with a little mascot figure attached and open the ridiculously meticulous wrapping. Inside was a pair of winter sports goggles and a cap that Lord von Voltaire had hand-made. This was definitely knitted by hand. Definitely. The tag just says 'Made'.

"... Don't abbreviate that."

"If I may be so bold, Your Majesty's hair is of an exceedingly noble color so..."

"Yeah yeah, I know. I'll put it on, you want me to put it on rig-... I-It has ears!?"

No wonder I thought it looked familiar. On both sides of the reddish brown knit, adorable bear ears were sticking out. It's an indispensible item for hatching bearbees, the number one rare animal that you want to hug and snuggle in bed with.

"This is too embarrassing to walk around with on my head nogisuuu!" (1) It'd be better to just stay as the masked man.

"Can't you just turn it inside out?" Taking the hat from my hands, Murata flips it over. There are strange lumps sticking up now, but the ears are on the inside and they don't stand out. "Like this."

"You're right! You're a genius, Muraken! That's The Great Sage for you."

To think that the wisdom of the Sage would come in handy in a place like this. Actually, I hope that it will come in handy in other situations as well.

I pull the cap with the ears on the inside down to my eyebrows and hide my eyes with the winter goggles. Now if I just had a mask that covered my mouth I'd totally feel pumped up to take part in the Winter Olympics.

"Nice, Shibuya. You look like a convenience store robber."

And it's all for nothing.

Because it's a high-speed boat, when we let down the gangway the continuously passing people suddenly gathered around the sides of the ship. If the uniformed guards hadn't stopped them, we wouldn't have been able to make our way through them. The masses are yelling things that are hard to understand and they bare their fists at us.

"You'd think that foreigners wouldn't be so unusual for an international port like this."

"Well it's the last day of registration for The World's Strongest Fighter Tournament. Anyone arriving is probably a contender."

Flynn took in the sight of the crazily yelling people and narrowed her eyes.

"To them, everyone is an enemy."

There is hatred and ridicule in the crowd. At the same time, the contempt they have for their vassal nations is rearing its head.

"... Can't they be more cheerful? For sportsmanship."

"Seriously. If only every international tournament was cheerful. Okay, we should probably take care of our entries as soon as possible. It'd be suspicious moving around with a bunch of people so just Gurrier and Captain Sizemore should be fine for bodyguards," said Murata.

Six people and one animal walk down the gangway and enter the Big Shimaron stronghold.

In spite of the guards holding the crowd back, the angry voices from the people do not stop. Maybe they're insults specific to this place because I absolutely do not understand any of it. Or rather, when I try to consciously focus on the words to understand them, it all sounds like a buzzing in my ears. Kind of like when I ruptured my eardrum. They are definitely human voices, but they sound like tens of thousands of bees swarming in my brain.

I might just be thrown off balance from seasickness, but I feel bad and my feet feel heavy. Rather than making me feel better, when I step onto solid ground I get even more nauseated.

Swallowing an unnatural amount of saliva, I try to fool myself out of my discomfort for a moment.

For the time being, I turn to talk to Murata to distract myself.

"This is cool. It's totally like we're the visiting team. Where are the elementary school kids to cheer on Caloria?"

"Having one school to one country was an excellent idea. But away teams are treated like this everywhere. Oh look, there's a bunch of hand signals with fists they're sending us. Those guys in the group on the right are all lifting their pinkies."

Now that he mentions it, their pinkies are sticking straight up on the fists they're waving in the air.

"So are they going 'Yay! All of us have girlfriends!' or something?" (2) "In a way they're challenging us to a fight."

"We should hold up our thumbs and pinkies and be like 'Hey give us a call!'"

There was a small shriek behind us. Someone had grabbed Flynn's blonde hair.

"Flynn!?"

"I'm fine, I'm fine. He stopped them."

The well-bred third son looked astonished. Even though she was an enemy, as a man he probably couldn't tolerate another man pulling a woman's hair. The other people reached out to Murata and me as well, but we bent backward, stooped forward and did some Matrix moves so we managed to dodge the harassment.

It seems that not even the Big Shimaron citizens would think to lay their hands on Josak or Sizemore. Strangely enough, even T-Zou was successfully keeping the hands away by wildly snorting and growling threateningly. When I tried growling as well... I got depressed because I looked like a weirdo.

As we got out of the port and entered East Nilzon and stopped being instantly recognized as new arrivals, no one paid much attention to us. Once you get through that 'baptism' upon entry, it seems you can move about quite freely.

"We only have the afternoon left so we should go register first. Hey," the stout-hearted Calorian woman says as she lowers her voice and grabs my sleeve. "... We may need Norman Gilbit again. If so-"

"Okay I'll wear it. If necessary I'll change into the masked man at any time."

"Thank you."

Like I suspected, the buildings are all painted white and yellow and only the roofs and ground are a bright yellow. They were mostly two story shops but there were also some three and four storied houses with lemon yellow walls. There were people of all ages milling around and they were living as they saw fit.

There's a group of housewives chatting on a street corner, squealing children running around, old men reading newspapers at a café-like shop, groups of men laughing at bars. At first glance, the men were mostly soldiers and the women

were mostly workers. The people carrying the food they just bought are women and the sellers are also women. Everyone has soft, brown hair and their eyes, although the darkness varied, are all brown as well.

There is an overly gaudy plaque on the water fountain in the square.

"Happy birth..."

"No. Nothing like that is written there," Wolfram said.

"For the honor of the great kingdom of Shimaron, We will provide. The King for the citizens. God for the King."

"I'm surprised you can read that thick and fancy writing, Murata."

While Flynn and Sizemore were submitting the registration papers, we went near the spraying water to get some fresh air. It would be nice if the buzzing in my ears and the light nausea I've felt since disembarking would ease up a bit. Then, I saw two children sitting in a gazebo on the other side of the square.

They are really white children.

".... Got a chill."

"What's wrong?" Wolfram asks instantly when he notices his partner shiver. It looks like he wants to continue with 'You better not have caught a cold right before this important match.' "How's your temperature? Let me feel your forehead."

However, I can't tear my gaze away from the gazebo without windows or walls. There is a pure-white and very pale curtain of light spreading around the two children. Or else the boys – or girls – are emitting something like phosphorescence from their bodies and hair. I can't tell from this distance.

But I feel like I still wouldn't be able to tell if I went right up next to them and squinted my eyes.

The two of them raised their right wrists at the same time and beckoned me over. The part of my brain that makes me suspicious won't work correctly. I can't even wonder why they're calling me or if the pain in my chest is love.

I can't fight it. I don't think it strange that I can't fight it.

At that moment, a shrill electronic noise sounds and my feet stop as I come back to myself.

"Hey you, turn your cell off... oh, I don't have one," I chide myself jokingly to hide my embarrassment.

It wasn't the ringtone on my cell phone, but my brave travelling companion the digital-analog G-shock. It hasn't been that long since I started using it, but this is the first time it malfunctioned and the alarm when off at this time of day.

```
"Shibuya!"

"... Hm... huh!? Eh, um, what!?"

"Where are you going?"

"Where? To those twins over there..."
```

I finally realize how incredibly close I had come near them. Now that I have a better look, I can see that the twins sitting next to each other in symmetrical poses are girls around eleven or twelve. They're identical down to the color of their hair, their waist-length hairstyles, their clothes, their facial expressions, the angles of their smirking lips, their bare feet, the rhythm they're swinging their feet – everything except their voices which I haven't heard yet. Even the timing that they waved at me and the length of their eyelashes.

"... It would be best not to get involved with them," Wolfram said as he wiped his forehead with the back of his hand. He's sweating in this cold weather. Now that I think about it, there's a cold sweat running down my own back. When I automatically glance at Murata's face, he once again has a serious expression.

"I agree with him. It would be best not to come into contact with them."

"Wh-why? They're just completely normal girls a little older than Greta... or maybe not..."

The girls' hair is almost completely white. Unlike Flynn's platinum blonde, their hair is almost white instead of silvery. They might have gotten that pale cream color if they bleached their fine, blonde hair over and over again. Either that or they were born with that color and it's reflecting the light around them.

Like Mr. Spock, their bangs are longest in the middle of their forehead instead

of on the sides and their large, wide-set eyes are emphasizing their childish charm. When I look closely, their irises are a deep gold with flecks of green. That's far more unusual than black.

Besides their faintly flushed cheeks, the downright abnormal whiteness of their chins and jaws can be described by a joke my mother made on a Sunday: "The wakame in the miso soup is so transparent it looks like you can see right through it."

They're inhuman in every way.



Their limbs are thin and flexible and they have on large, unbecoming shoes.

"They're cute... or rather, beautiful aren't they."

But even so, it's a different type of beautiful compared to the demons with Lady Cecilie, The Pheromone Beauty, as representative. Even when faced with the super beauty Günter, I had never broken out into a cold sweat as someone with an average face and figure. However, just by looking at these girls, my throat is closing up.

What am I so nervous about when these two twin beauties invited me over? I turn my back on them and speak in a low voice to Murata and Wolfram.

"This is the first time I've seen one, but are they by chance elves?"

"'Alves'? What are those?" Wolfram asks.

"Shibuya, you play too many video games. Elves are imaginary creatures."

"Huh?"

Even though this is a world with kappa and fish people, elves are imaginary creatures!?

Giving a small laugh at my idiotic expression, Murata lowers his voice.

"If you look closely, their ears aren't pointed. If you think for a moment it's obvious. Elves in RPGs or fantasy stories are better than humans in every way. If that sort of species existed, the world would be controlled by them."

"How rude. I don't know what kind of people those el... el... 'elbs' are, but there's no way that we demons would be inferior to them!"

It seems the former super-elite from The Great Demon Kingdom could not simply let that comment pass.

"Then those two are normal humans? If so, their beauty is a bit different."

"Yeah, those girls are definitely not human. If I had to guess, I'd say they're Shin-"

It happened when the intellectual Murata was about to teach me a new word.

"Big brother!"

When I turn around, the two girls in question are smiling with their hands joined together.

After staring them in the eyes for three seconds, I hurriedly turn back into the discussion huddle.

"They just said 'big brother'!"

And in a cutesy way you could tack a heart on the end of. Who!? Who is the big brother!? The eldest son of the Murata family speaks first.

"I'm an only child."

"I only have one older brother."

"I have two older brothers... Yuuri! Do you have a hidden sister this time!?"

"Don't say something scary like that! First of all, I'm cosplaying as a convenience store robber with goggles on. Like a sibling separated at birth would recognize me? And what about you? Maybe Lady Celi got a new lover and... hey, you know she said that she wanted a daughter."

"Mother, don't tell me you laid your hands on a Shinzoku..."

The youngest son was at a loss for words.

The twins call out to us again as we stand half bent over talking to each other.

"Big brothers!"

Smile. Smiiiiile.

"Th-they just said 'big brothers'!"

"That means all three of us are their brother!?"

"Being suddenly called 'big brother' by a beautiful young girl in a foreign land..." I've heard of situations like this before. "I got it! They're little sister characters! But that set up is for getting a bunch of little sisters, not for suddenly getting three big brothers... ah."

My stalker fiance's eyes have gone wide and my schoolmate is laughing. Damn! Did I just reveal I borrowed my brother's dating games?

"Don't say such infuriating things. There's no way that something unrealistic

like that would happen," says Wolfram.

"Actually I like the priestess characters more," Murata chimes in.

"... Well

excuse me..."

"It really doesn't matter, Young Masters. But I think they're just calling you over."

The calmest one was Josak who apparently has no interest in the little sister type. They probably have patient personalities because the two girls are still waving at us.

"Good afternoon, big brothers!"

Their voices and timing are identical and it's like only one person is talking.

"H-hello."

Wolfram whispers 'They're Shinzoku, the people of heaven. You had better not get involved with them' in my ear. By 'people of heaven' does he mean gods? Then... those girls are gods? It seems that two female-shaped gods are taking a rest in a public square in this land of Big Shimaron. If we went to a sushi place nearby, the shopboy's god will definitely be there. Even though I'm a baseball brat without the slightest shred of religious piety, my speech turns formal when standing before a god. (3)

"I apologize for not having a monetary offering even though I do not have the pleasure of meeting you outside of the first month of the new year."

The twin gods giggled. And then, they spoke in a peculiar way.

"Fortune telling?"

"Hm? As in, do I believe in it?"

The god on the right wordlessly takes my hand. Just when I thought she was going to read my palm, she grasps my thumb instead. The feeling of nausea spreading throughout my stomach and chest gets stronger and the veins in the back of my head start pulsating like I have an extra heart there. I reflexively try to snatch back my hand, but it feels like my joints will disconnect and I can't pull

away.

"Ow-"

I hold back the scream that almost passed through my throat. She has a marvelous grip strength for being so thin. Without paying attention to the pain I'm in, she asks a point-blank question.

"The World's Strongest?"

"As in, am I entering? Yeah, that's the plan. Of course I'm entering."

After that, the two of them continue in concert. Victory? Possible? Hope?

They're not going to let me finish talking? It's annoying, like reading subtitles in a movie.

"Too bad."

"You're suddenly giving me a divine prophecy!? That's a bad omen."

"Big brothers, will get injured."

That's an even worse omen.

The twins quite cheerfully turn to look at each other and keep laughing. They're definitely divine and beautiful, but... I can't think of a word to describe it. Even if I furrow my brows and think really hard, I can't make up for my limited vocabulary. It's like they're finding the misfortune of others amusing or like they don't think of people as people or something along those lines.

The deep golden eyes of the god on the left look over my goggles and peer into my eyes.

'I'm found out,' I thought.

"King?"

"K-k-king!? I'm definitely not a home-run batter! Although if you can tell someone's batting statistics just by looking at their face and thumb I absolutely want you to become my team's batting coach!"

"Not by face. Soul."

I panic and try to pull back my thumb, but I'm being held with unexpectedly

powerful strength. I can't pull free.

"Hey!" Wolf grabs my arm from the side and fixes the girl with a cold glare passed down from his brother. "Let go."

"You."

"You. This person, subordinate?"

The former Crown Prince falters for a moment after being gazed at by the other god. In order to say that he isn't someone who would obey someone else, I open my mouth but the twins beat me to it.

"Even though you have the talent to become a king."

"Even though your soul was exceedingly noble before this life and before the last."

"Well of course, he used to be a prince-ouch! Wolfram, what? Violence is..."

I notice his bloodless face. The pure-blooded demon from a famous noble family, the son of the previous king, is glaring murderously at the twins. But in his profile, I see an emotion different than anger. He probably remembered the horrible way he met me.

The girls were laughing. From deep in their throats, cheerfully.

The sweat I've been building up flows down my back in a single line. It seems these twins who are so beautiful they give me the chills aren't actually gods.

"It's true. In you, they're collected. Right?"

"Right. Your past lives, we can see them."

"Hey you two, if you can tell just by looking, why did you grab my finger? By any chance are you harassing me? ... Wolf, you don't have to listen to these little sexual harasser girls. That fortune-telling doesn't mean anything. Anyone can tell that you're a prince on a white horse just by looking at you. Whether you're good at skiing is a different matter."

I'm basically just a muscle head so I don't have the slightest bit of persuasive power. It's times like these that the Twin Black Great Sage comes in handy. Please resolve this issue.

"Oh really?"

After humming a verse of El Bimbo, Murata takes 2, 3 steps forward. Damn it, he's in Tokyo Magic Robinson Mode.

"So you can see the

past lives of a soul

just by looking at someone's face. Amazing, Magic Robinson, jealousy."

Wondering why the BGM didn't stop, I notice that Josak has continued whistling it. It was out of tune due to him not being overly familiar with the song and it had thus become strangely upbeat.

"As someone also in the business, I simply have to try this. Okay," he sticks his chin out at the pair, "tell me my past life."

"... You."

There was a long and heavy silence. The two girls are shaking slightly and grasping each other's hands. After a while, the girl on the right opens her mouth, but she's not smiling cheerfully anymore.

"Scholar?

"Bzzt, wrong. In my past life I was a female porn star in a series called Sister Christine's Sweet Trap

. Well then, what about before that?"

"... Scribe?"

"Bzzt, wrong again. Before that I was a combat medic in World War I who had quite a tough time. Hey, you're not getting anything right. But I'm sure just being beautiful, twin sister fortune tellers brings in plenty of customers anyway."

The girls' transparent white skin flushes red like paint was spilled on them. The hand grasping mine was trembling. Facing their first defeat must be quite mortifying.

Forget that, Murata. What was up with your past life? What do you mean Sweet Trap? What's a Sweet Trap?

It happened when the beautiful twins clenched their fists and looked like they were about to let loose a string of unseemly insults. From the other side of the spray of the water fountain, a man in a foreign country's military outfit appeared.

"Jason, Freddy, did something happen?"

It was a harsh voice more mature than his age that I would never be able to forget even if I tried.

The two girls he called out to stood up in sync.

"Maxine!"

Nigel Wise Maxine.

The worst man in Small Shimaron.

"Their names are Jason and Freddy even though they're twins? ... They should have been Osugi and Piiko." (4)

Once again, what Murata chooses to comment on is slightly off the mark.

- (1) I'm sure pretty much everyone has seen the bearbee episode, but just in case, nogisu is the sound bearbees make. They were introduced in KakkaMa in the story I'm currently working on translating ^-^
- (2) Lifting your pinky is a hand signal that means girlfriend. Extra info: The thumb means boyfriend.
 - (3) There is a Japanese story called

Kozou no Kamisama

by Shiga Naoya that was translated into English as

The Shopboy's God

. It's about a boy who goes to a sushi shop on the way home from an errand but finds out that he doesn't have enough money to eat there and goes away. A nobleman who saw this happen buys some sushi and brings it to the boy. However, the boy didn't realize that someone had seen him walk away empty

handed and while he's trying to figure out how this man knew he wanted sushi, he decides that the man must be a god. The boy then believes that this man will appear whenever he is in trouble. The story ends somewhat prematurely because the author would have felt bad for the boy when he discovered that the man wasn't actually a god.

(4) Osugi and Piiko are actors who are twin brothers. As for Freddy and Jason... I'm pretty sure that

Freddy vs. Jason

and their respective franchises were released worldwide, but just in case, Freddy and Jason are horror movie villains who ended up mortal enemies XD

That's the end of this chapter! Word has been randomly taking out spaces between characters lately. It's getting really annoying D: I think I put like, 20 spaces back into this while proofreading. :p

Anyway, see you all next chapter!

Next Chapter -->

Tags: kkm translation, novel 7

Current Location: Home!

Current Mood: thirsty

Current Music: DOA from the Attack on Titan OST

KKM Novel 7, Chapter 6

<-- Previous Chapter

There's a joke involving English words in this first section so I'm going to underline all the words that were already in English because it won't make sense otherwise once

everything

is translated into English XD But anyway, since I did it for the first part, I figured I'd just underline all of the English words in this chapter that Yuuri uses and the ones that show up in the narration as well just for fun. These include words that have been borrowed from English and it's normal for them to be used, but a bunch of them are also just random English words that Yuuri randomly uses at random. Did I mention the random-ness? XD Murata does it too when he gets all goofy and Muraken-ish. Anyway, I thought it might be interesting to show just how many words the two of them use that no one else can understand.

So anyway, there was another name in this chapter that was different in the Chinese version and that would be the family name of the people who the high-speed ship belongs to, Duchar > Dugald. There is only one other name what was different in the Chinese version so I'm just going to throw it out here too, but you don't really need to remember it because it isn't used again in this novel (it might be in future novels, but who knows because I haven't read them yet). The captain of the Dugald ship is named Hicks, not Descuss. I can see how all the other names changed a bit, but this one has me really confused o.O So yeah, he is Hicks Dugald II, not Descuss Duchar II.

Chapter 6

Greta presses her cheek onto the top of the desk after closing her book with a snap.

The coolness of the stone surface feels good in the overheated room.

"Dictionaries are boring."

"Really? Learning words you do not know one by one is exceedingly satisfying."

Lady Anissina von Karbelnikoff drops several strands of grey hair into a foaming, moss green liquid. It cannot be determined who they belong to.

"Around when I was your size, I had compiled a dictionary for my own personal use. While it is a disappointing fact, there is still no guide to the dialect specific to aquatic life in this kingdom and the survey of the elusive Fish Skeleton Tribe is going nowhere."

"Fish Skeleton Tribe!?"

Children from any world always love mysterious animals. After being depressed that her beloved mother and father (it is uncertain who is who) won't come home, hearing the name of an UMA (Unidentified Mysterious Animal) makes her face light up in excitement.

"Awesome! What's the Fish Skeleton Tribe!?"

"Similar to the Flying Skeleton Tribe and the Earth Skeleton Tribe, they are a species of aquatic life with bodies that look like bones. If someone encounters one on a beach and calls out to it, there is no answer and it appears to simply be a corpse. However, it is said that they swim freely in peaceful seas and lakes away from public gaze."

Greta knits her manly eyebrows together and tries to imagine it. Swimming bones.

'' . . .

Isn't that just someone's leftovers?"

"Of course not. No matter how talented the chef, it is impossible for them to leave a fish able to swim around so energetically. Because they are a rare creature that are hardly ever found, we call them Fish Skeleton Bowls and they are treated as bringers of good fortune. There is nothing more adorable than one of them wrapped up in seaweed." (1)

"Fish Skeleton Bowls..."

The child is listening with rapt attention. The skeletons probably have

barnacles stuck on them as well.

"Deciphering their words and having interactions with ones of differing cultures is enjoyable. The dictionary I compiled is around here... ah!"

Even Lady Anissina von Karbelnikoff - the confident and intellectual beauty, the one who holds magical power worthy of being called one of The Great Demon Kingdom's Three Great Witches, the number one woman to appear in the dreams of children, The Red Devil and the Mad Magicalist of any season - felt inconvenienced by something.

She was just a little bit on the small side.

'I don't need money (I have it already) and I don't need women (because I'm a woman), but I want to be just a little taller.' The fact that she has murmured this to herself about three times since she was born is a secret that only Lord von Voltaire knows. In any case, there was usually someone taller around to assist her so she had never been troubled by this much. However, as she tried to grab the thick, leather-bound book from its tall perch, she knocked over something near it. She managed to catch it with her arms, many times stronger than they appeared, however.

"Anissina, are you okay?"

"Yes, I am fine. Oh, this is 'Urgent Report: Authentic Information! His Majesty Yuuri's 24 Words'."

"What's that!?"

"It is a reference with words from His Majesty's birthplace paired with words in the High Demon language that I began writing in order to show him some reverence and respect by understanding the circumstances in which he was raised. However, since he is a person who is often absent from the country... I am afraid I have only been able to record 24 words."

"I wanna see I wanna see let me see!"

Being faced with a girl who holds the future on her shoulders, even The Red Devil gets an uncertain look on her face.

"I will remind you that it still only scratches the surface. Fine then. What word

would you like to know?" Anissina asked as she opened the dark blue book. There are letters with peculiar thickness and size written within. It is highly unlikely that it is her handwriting. It's almost like a code. If a love letter was sent to someone in this writing, it would likely be mistaken for a new brand of harassment.

```
"Hm, okay then, 'hel'!"

"Hel?"

"Yeah, that. Yuuri uses the word 'hel' a lot. Like

'helmet' and 'help me'

and Sakkon's

healthy

shikou." (2)

"...

'Hel' ... Ah, here it is."
```

Greta watched Anissina's neatly trimmed, poison-sea-spider-colored fingernails in admiration. If she became a man, she'd like to be like Yuuri and if she was a woman, she'd like to be like Anissina.

Her plans for her future are fairly concerning. They can't be encouraged.

```
"...

Hell

, it means hell."

"Hell?"

"It seems so. Incidentally,

'thy'

means ocean. In other words,

'healthy'

means Sea of Hell." (3)
```

"A Sea of Hell. Yuuri lives in an amazing place... huh?"

The sound of quick footsteps and a trailing scream come echoing from the other end of the long hall.

"

Ahhhhhhhhh!"

With his waist-length hair trailing behind him parallel to the floor,

Real

Lord Günter von Christ runs past them. The hems of his long pants are rolled all the way up and even his thighs are completely exposed.

"

His Highness! His Highness's return to The Great Demon Kingdom! With seven consecutive nights in celebration with banquets and drinking there will be so many people collapsing and shedding their clothes I must put aside my rank for tonight

-!"

He ran past the open door with a speed that surpassed the wind. Before that thought could even pass their minds, His Excellency Lord Gwendal von Voltaire, face red, rushed after him screaming as well.

"Wait! That's exceeding our budget and the female nobles don't want that! THIS IS WHY I'M TELLING YOU NOT TO GO SPREADING THIS AROUND!"

'' . . .

I have been feeling as if it were chaotic lately and it seems that it is because the vulgar men have lost their minds. I suppose stopping this as soon as possible is the responsibility of the wise. Greta, cover your ears."

"Okay."

Anissina activates 'Killer Bomb! The Magic-Powered Homing Missile'.

"This is
hell."
"Yeah, it's
hell."

- (1) The way Fish Skeleton Bowl is written implies that it's a rice bowl similar to a chicken bowl, shrimp bowl, etc. So pretty much what happened here is that Anissina said 'No, they're not food, but we call them this food name.'
- (2) I'm going to be 100% honest and say that I could not figure out what Sakkon's Healthy Shikou is supposed to be. The consensus is that it's probably an energy drink.
- (2) There is no 'th' sound in Japanese so the way that Yuuri says the 'thy' in 'healthy' ends up being 'shii' which then in turn sounds like 'sea'. It makes sense, I swear!

....*

Nigel Wise Maxine is the man who turned Caloria into Hell.

He has the Small Shimaron trademark hair style and beard style, a thin face and white cheeks without muscle and, if I had to describe them, thin eyes with single-fold eyelids. Because of that, his overall impression was sharp-witted and lethal more so than strong and fearless. The nickname I decided for him was Cropped

Ponytail

, but I have no intention of using such a cute name for him.

"Hey, Cropped

Pony

! You got some nerve showing your face here!"

Ah, I used it.

"Oh, that voice. Look who it is."

As usual, he was wearing even the dark red mantle of the Small Shimaron military and his face - with even more injuries - distorted a bit. He probably laughed. He starts talking in his intentionally slow and subdued manner meant to intimidate.

"The guest of Norman Gilbit of Caloria who, along with the gallant prisoners, volunteered for an honorable task in service of His Majesty Saralegi, king of Small Shimaron and then went missing after an unknown power went wild - Captain Crusoe or something... wasn't it?"

"I'd rather you shorten that introduction."

And in any case, there are details that are conveniently wrong.

It was a while ago, but it also seemed like just yesterday. This man carried out an experiment in the name of his king and, as we were headed to Big Shimaron on the western side of the continent (which received no damage), we were gathered together in a

stadium

along with a bunch of unlucky prisoners where he tried to release the horribly evil weapon, 'The End of the Land.' With the wrong key that I have no idea where he obtained.

Conrad's arm.

Maxine narrows his single-fold eyes and looked over my companions.

"The demons are multiplying. I've met your aide there, but this is the first time I've had the pleasure to meet this beautiful one. Well I say, you've all gathered together. Is this some sort of carefree sightseeing trip in Shimaron?"

"What!? You're one to talk! After doing all that to Caloria, to half the continent, you're on a family trip with your daughters!? Ah, you young ladies are not at fault here."

"Daughters?" The man who seems like he would even smell cold stands next to the twins in a heartwarming scene. "Mine? Certainly not. Although I did name them."

"You named them!?"

I wonder if naming rights lie with someone other than the parents in this world. But anyway, what's up with naming beautiful twin girls Jason and Freddy? Even though they're so pretty and cute, if you get them together they're

Splatter Sisters

who you never know when they're going to start murdering someone.

"Oh man, I-I'm so lucky that the man who named me didn't call me

'The Ring

'Shibuya."

"I might have ended up Zaku Murata. That would have been bad." (1)

II . . .

Zaku, huh? That's a fitting name for a warrior," Wolfram says with a bit of appreciation. Even so, do not name a girl that.

"These people," said either Friday the 13th or Elm Street as they grabbed the cold man's arm. I want to be a good big brother and tell them that they must not be friendly with a man like this. However, these girls might be like demons where you can't tell how old they are just by looking at them. They might be much older than I am. I have never met a god in person before so it's better to be safe than sorry.

"These people, World's Best."

"They said they were going to enter? I see... honestly, I must say."

He looks like he should be stroking his beard so it doesn't seem likely he'll wish us luck. I got a bad feeling. If we're talking about things with beards, I'd prefer the bearded seal.

"I hadn't heard that the country of demons was invited. Ah, are you fighting for Caloria despite being visitors of another species? I'd thought they wouldn't be able to participate because that place had fallen on misfortune."

''...

You don't have any shame do you? ... That was your fault."

"You're saying that was my fault? And here is another outrageous

misunderstanding."

He raises the hands he had rested on the girl's shoulders. After facing his palms to the sky, the

standby

for his

<u>speech</u>

concludes.

"

Caloria became the territory of Small Shimaron. As such, the citizens of that place must devote everything to His Majesty, King Saralegi of Small Shimaron. That is their destiny. No one can defy the will of the gods. In fact, they should feel blessed to be able to be of use to His Majesty. At present we bow to our forefather of Big Shimaron, but that is only for now. Eventually the two kingdoms will unite and Lord Saralegi will rule over all. Oh what better word should be used to describe the joy of being able to serve this great being?"

He's gotten completely carried away. However, I have made one surprising discovery.

"

So at the moment, Small Shimaron has to obey Big Shimaron."

Maxine frowned slightly and the scars on his cheek drew tight.

"

Resourceful and talented men being able to rule over the masses is the way of the world. Before long, the day will come when Lord Saralegi will govern over the entire continent, no, the entire world. That is also destiny. Captain Crusoe," using my title with deliberate, hypocritical politeness, the Refrigerator Man peers over my goggles

and right into my eyes. "According to certain people, Twin Blacks with black eyes and black hair are rare creatures. You likely have quite a dignified position in your own kingdom. However... Captain, and the rest of you demons, it is

interesting that you have the time to come to this far away, enemy territory to represent a foreign country that you have no ties to. As one would expect of those who struggled until the very end in the previous war and gave us all that trouble."

I might be imagining it, but the temperature of my neighbor on my right was unusually high. The former Crown

Prince

seems to be boiling in his rage. Wolfram was so irritated it looked like he could draw his sword at any moment. However, he only spoke in a cold voice without moving his right hand in the slightest. He is impressively controlling his emotions in what looks like an imitation of his eldest brother.

"

And how old were you at that time, human? You were probably wrapped up in your filthy bed trembling in fear."

"

Wh-... I was already 15..."

"

A new recruit then. That reminds me, I remember letting a frightened recruit run away around Dormael. He had pissed himself in his terror and I couldn't stand the smell."

"

I was never anywhere near Dormael."

"

Hm, I'd thought that a new recruit's first battle would have been just like that pathetic little skirmish. Then were you involved in the fierce fighting at Arnold? There's no way. I heard from my brother that no one survived that battle."

Maxine panicked at hearing the name of that place. I end up feeling a sense of reliability from Wolfram.

"

Impossible! You're a survivor of Arnold!? Then you were a member of the Luttenberg Division at such a young-"

•

Oh you know, I was at Arnold."

"

Eh!?"

Behind us all, Josak lightly waves his hand.

"

You're talking about my division. Ah, how nostalgic. My lovely self was bursting with youthful energy and vigor back then." (2)

The outer appearances of demons are as amazing as crab dishes. When you compare Cropped

Pony

and Josak, Josak is the one that looks younger. But that's only on the outside and he is actually almost three times older. If the

<u>Pheromone</u>

Queen Lady Celi were human, she'd be in the Guinness Book of World Records for age. However, it's too late by the time you find that out. Fooled by that

nice body

and alluring smile, my mind and body were completely taken out of order. Although, I am also at fault for being deceived.

"

Well, I guess I'm the youngest one here after all. Loaches and carps don't come out until spring." (3)

"

But you really are lucky. The scars you got from this <u>rookie</u>

here seemed to have healed nicely," Murata comments.

Maxine's lips twist. The scars on his cheek stretch. Did I really give him those?

You're joking- ..." I swallow the words that almost left my mouth. Because as I watched, the man's face was slowly being overtaken by fear. Cropped <u>Pony</u> grabbed the twins' arms and ran away at full speed.

Well then, everyone, we shall meet at the arena!" he calls over his shoulder like in a period drama. Freddy or Jason gives us a small wave.

While I was standing there in shock not knowing what happened, an animal charged onto the scene with roaring hooves.

T-Zou!"

"

"

Nmofunnmofunnmofufufufu!"

Her rectangular pupils turned triangular and her fluffy fur is standing on end in anger. She's breathing heavily.

Oh, he doesn't like sheep? You really can't tell by appearances."

A sheep..."

If there is a man with a similar unparalleled cool-headedness that has unending love for small and cute animals contradictory to his appearance, there are people who are abnormally fearful of hoofed creatures. It would be quite the

<u>scene</u>

if we threw the both of them into a children's petting zoo.

Accompanied by Sizemore, Flynn appeared on the other side of the fountain. After finding me, she gives a relieved smile and her gait quickens to a jog. When she comes within arm's length, her expression suddenly becomes worried. Her

cold fingers touch my cheek.

"

What's wrong? You look pale."

"

Hm? Nothing much. There's nothing new. My lips are probably just turning purple because it's cold here."

Without a doubt, there is nothing new since just a little while ago. My condition hasn't suddenly become worse. I've been like this since I got off the boat. Like the first symptoms of a cold, my chest and head are bothering me. I'm a little nauseous, it's hard to breathe, my head is heavy and I'm in a bit of pain. And then my ears are buzzing as well.

"

It's understandable; this is human land after all. There were shinzoku right in front of us before. The particles of their powers were strong. The effects are severe for both the bodies and spirits of powerful demons. Lord von Bielefelt feels tired as well, no? Gurrier, Captain Sizemore and I should be fine... What's wrong, captain? You look depressed." (4)

After being addressed, the middle-aged man bowed his head in dejection. "Ah, no Your Highness. I am honored by your concern, but... this is a very personal matter."

As Flynn flipped through the registration booklet, she tilted her head to the side in suspicion. Her silver hair flows over her shoulder and gleams in the afternoon light as it covers her back. "This man is always depressed."

"

Depressed? Don't worry captain, don't hold back. If Murata and I can do something for you..."

"

Ah, Your Majesty, that would be a waste! I'm only, well, all of the soldiers here in this country have... wonderful hair..."

Wonderful hair!? The Rookie Demon King, the former Crown

Prince

Pretty Boy and even The Great Sage all yell this in unison.

Now that he mentions it, their soft, long hair is attractive, but it's not the sort of

hair style

that a middle aged man would dream about. Or maybe this demon version of Francisco Xavier simply longs for hair on the top of his head. The one who spoke first was Wolfram.

"

A-are you an idiot!? For a soldier, hair is just something that covers your head!"

"

Yes sir, I apologize, Your Excellency! It is as you say."

"

Come on now, Wolf. If Captain Sizemore wanted, he could transfer from the military into baseball. Then he can cover his head with a hat or a <u>helmet</u>."

"

No, captain, you shouldn't cover up your individuality. In that respect, <u>soccer</u> is a good choice. Zidane is an international hero." (5)

"

Is hair really that important?"

At Flynn's question – with her shining

platinum blonde

hair – we all yelled, "We don't want to hear that from you!"

She faltered momentarily at the men's reaction but she quickly collects herself and changes the subject.

"

Yes, that's right. My hair is quite beautiful. It is one of the weapons of women. But now we need beast's fur more than hair. The opening day for 'Use your knowledge, speed and skill to win! The World's Best Fighter Tournament' is the day after tomorrow. Before then, we need to find a vehicle we can use in the speed contest and acquire an animal to tow it."

If I'm hearing things like Tajima, Flynn just said that she has been using that weapon of women. That's horrible. This is a

gender

studies issue! No wait, more importantly, if my hearing is correct, she just said that we need a vehicle and an animal to pull it. (6)

What's up with that?

I've finally become a little scared of The World's Best Fighter Tournament.

- (1) Zaku are mobile suits in Gundam ^-^ 99.99999% of the time, they're the enemy's.
- (2) Linguistic note! The word for 'bursting with youthful energy and vigor' Josak used (yes, it's only one word in Japanese XD) is usually only for describing young girls.
- (3) This is a reference to a children's song called Dojokko Funakko. It's a silly little song about children thinking about what loaches and carps think of the things that happen in their waters. Like, they wonder if the fishes think that monsters are in the water when little kids go swim or if they think that a bunch of little boats have sailed up when the leaves fall in autumn.
- (4) This is just a linguistic note about something that I wanted to call attention to. In Japanese, the 'captain' in Captain Sizemore is not the same word used for Captain Crusoe. Sizemore is a captain of a ship so his title is 'senchou' while Yuuri was pretending to be a navy captain so he gets called 'taisa'. I'm saying this because in the next section, Flynn calls Yuuri 'captain' and I saw the potential for confusion.

- (5) Zinedine Zidane was a bald soccer player from France. He is now an assistant coach.
- (6) Youko Tajima is a famous and popular Japanese feminist who is a former member of the Japanese Diet and appears on numerous variety shows, dramas, *etc.*

....*

'Use your knowledge, speed and skill to win! The World's Best Fighter Tournament,' audaciously abbreviated to 'The World's Best' was a contest true to its name.

In other words, you can't get by with just being smart and you can't win if you have muscles for brains. Even if you're wise and strong and smart, you can't be a slow tortoise like in my mom's favorite saying.

"

As the schedule is now, the contestants will be thinned out during the 'knowledge' section first and then they will move on to the 'speed' event. We need a vehicle and animal for this. The starting point is Nilzon and all the territories participating will race to Big Shimaron's royal capital of Lambert." (1)

u

Wait! Wait, that knowledge test

, will I be okay with having enough technical skill to buy

<u>juice</u>

from a vending machine?"

"

Shibuya, we're not chimpanzees."

"

I've heard they are written questions, but... it's the first time for me as well."

"

Gah! A written test! I'm going to get disqualified! I'm only good with scantrons

so there's no way I'll be able to get a good score on a written test in a foreign language!"

To make matters worse, Flynn had written Wolfram, Josak and me into the three spots on the team member list. We were so overconfident we overlooked the fact that we had to actually make it to the finals.

After all, the finals are a fighting contest based on 'skill.' We will have to fight with Big Shimaron's strongest soldiers. It's rude to say this, but I don't think that Mr. Robinson is very skilled in combat. You, captain, don't seem to be much better in this respect, but you have an unfathomable amount of magical power.

There was a really cheap jab in there, but she did her best to explain her reasoning. It says that hired mercenaries are allowed, but there has to be at least one person from the represented area in the three man team. It is also said that the opponents in the finals will be the victors of the previous tournament, Big Shimaron. It's like an eternal

seed

for their perpetual authority.

"

What does that mean? So I'm not entered as a mysterious demon or Captain Crusoe, but as the Calorian Norman Gilbit?"

... Yes."

"

"

Wow." So my failure is Norman Gilbit's failure and my victory is Norman Gilbit's victory? Now that a dead man's honor is on my shoulders, my responsibility has doubled. "But don't the leaders in Big Shimaron know that your husband died a long time ago?"

"

They have their doubts, but I believe they do not know for sure. They came to me first. The people in Shimaron thought that since Norman was a pure and noble man he would never hand over the evil Wincott poison even if it was for the benefit of the young people of Caloria."

Flynn gave a self-deprecating laugh and turned her gaze toward a nearby store.

So they thought that

you

would be capable of anything.

They had come to the conclusion that Flynn would dirty her hands to save the young men of her country.

We rushed into the marketplace in a big hurry, but the only things for sale were daily essentials and food. The merchant who handled

all-in-one

horse and carriage

<u>sets</u>

"

"

had closed shop a long time ago. We ended up just walking along with a sigh in the streets crowded with people buying ingredients for dinner.

It's no use. Alright, a pumpkin! We'll buy a pumpkin and have Muraken turn it into a carriage!"

That's impossible. Let's

step up to the

challenge

of running by ourselves.

Go!"

"

I have a plan that will make you realize how great I am," Wolfram says.

"

Go ahead!"

The two of us hold up pantomimed

mics

to Wolfram's face at the same time.

"

There is a military tank onboard the Dugald high-speed ship used for disembarkation."

"

That's it! But what kind of tank is it? If it's a heavy tank with a cannon on top I don't think a horse will be able to pull it."

In this

<u>ecological</u>

land without

gasoline

, electricity or nuclear power, I might have a different idea on what the word 'tank' means in this world.

"

It is light and maneuverable, but since it is a military tank, the inside is small. The drawback for being small enough to attract the least amount of attention possible is that the soldiers riding inside have to have a lot of endurance."

"

I see. So comfort is sacrificed." We're not going to live inside of it so it's okay if it's a little cramped! "So it's got good gas mileage and it's fast, right? We'll use that. Besides, we haven't run across anything faster. This time, a fastball is better than a skilled throw. So now we just need an animal to pull it, a horse."

"

The committee has specified that it has to be less than the power of four horses."

Okay, so it's going to be a carriage with four horses. However, when we walked around the marketplace there wasn't a single merchant selling horses.

Since it's a popular animal that everyone here loves, it seems that all the

rental

agreements were made in the early days of the preparation for the tournament. And not just horses. Cows and

macho

men too.

"

Machos!?"

"

Um, well if you convert their pulling power into numbers, a group of 12 brawny men roughly adds up to the power of four horses. It doesn't have to be a horse pulling the vehicle. As long as the numbers don't exceed the maximum limit."

"

S-so anything goes!? So that means even sand bears and Hell's Paradise Goalas? Even that Labakap that I missed out on seeing would be okay?" (2)

u

You can't tame such rare beasts."

So you're telling me I missed out on seeing something

super

rare? Now I wanna see a sand bear go on a rampage and twelve

<u>muscle</u>

men pulling a carriage. I'll call it 'The Rickshaw of Flames.' That's a terrific name, right? They'd be shoulder to shoulder and humming a song by

The Village People

. When they passed by, all that would remain would be the bittersweet scent

of manly sweat.

For some reason, T-Zou started growling lowly as she walked next to Sizemore who had his hand stuck in her fluffy fur. Maybe she's sick of chewing her cud.

"

What's the matter? Did the captain try and rip out some of your fur in a fit of jealousy?"

"

Y-Your Majesty! I would never do something like that."

1

Nmofuuu!"

In an instant, she crouches down and leaps into a run. Turning a corner at reckless speeds, we immediately lose sight of her. This is bad. When I hurry after her in a panic, I see a group of white masses wriggling around together about 300

meters

away. They're sheep.

T-Zou had rushed into the center of the flock and was being given a huge welcome by her sheep friends. They were all delightedly rubbing noses and bumping together and rolling around on the ground.

There was a girl around middle-school age and a woman who looked like her mother standing nearby. Her misshapen and thick braid whips around in slow motion when she turns her head in our direction.

"

Ah! Mary!"

I was about to say, 'Hey Murata. You said it's been a really long time since you've been to this world, but you've already found a girlfriend' when I remembered. Mary's little lamb!

She had taken thirty sheep while we were in the Plainsmen territory. T-Zou was one of them, but she ended up becoming our travelling companion. We had sold

the other 29 to a shepherdess to cover our travelling expenses.

I hadn't witnessed it, but according to Murata, the girl had been the one to handle the transaction.

Putting aside how they had ended up in Big Shimaron, that flock had been T-Zou's from the start. I can understand why she would stop her favorite activity to run off.

"

Nmonmonmonmoshkashteeee!"

It's an explosion of an adverbial shout. (3)

"

16 sheep equals four horses," Flynn murmured as she watched over the heartwarming scene.

... Hm? Seriously!?

- (1) Just wanted to note that I'm not sure if this should be written Lambert or Rambert. Lambert seems to be the more likely spelling though ^-^ The spellcheck also likes Lambert better XD The 't' is silent, by the way.
 - (2) These are all animals mentioned in AshitaMa~
 - (3) Moshikashite means 'maybe' in Japanese hence the adverb comment.

And there's chapter 6! Planned on putting this out earlier, but I was busy and stranded without reliable internet o.o Well, since there's only three more chapters on this novel I'm going to finish the last few pages of The Taming of the Bear and then just focus on TenMa. See you then!

Next Chapter -->

Tags: kkm translation, novel 7

Current Location: Kona!

Current Mood: geeky

Current Music: DOA from the Attack on Titan OST

KKM Novel 7, Chapter 7

<-- Previous Chapter

The random is strong in this chapter XD

Illustration found on

Portrait of a Demon King.

Chapter 7

Aiko Sixteen

, sixteen sheep,

Enatsu's 21 Pitches. (1)

The last one will come in real handy for a baseball brat, but I don't know about the first two. Besides, there's a good chance that people without experience won't be able to handle sixteen sheep.

Because all the horses, cows and machos were rented out and there weren't any other animals at hand, we on Team Caloria have no choice but to use sheep to pull our vehicle. In this world, four sheep equals the power of one horse so to reach the speed of a carriage pulled with four horses, we have roped together sixteen sheep.

Our Sheep Master, Miss Mary, has been training us both gently and severely. However, we only have a day and we students are a noble third son who seems to have not had any contact with livestock whatsoever and the Gurrier (grilled) lamb loving Josak. And then there's me who hardly even

wears

any wool. There's no way that we can easily control the sheep and our training has been high stress since the morning started. The non-magic-powered military tank – which wasn't any different than a small carriage although it seems to be made of a light and durable material – was carried here in a hurry, but our crucial towing animals weren't obeying orders. If we can't get them to line up properly,

we can't belt them all together.

" ...

It's hopeless, this slow movement. Just looking at it is making me tired.

Besides, I can't even imagine sheep pulling a carriage. I can only imagine them eating paper."

"Shibuya, that's what black goats do."

"What are you talking about, eh? 'Seep' are made for running eh, yeah." (2)

If the school system goes 6-3-3, then Miss Mary is around a 1st year middle school student. Like she was a committee chairman from the school of hard knocks, she swings about her thick braid when she turns her head. She's cracking a whip with a snap-snap as she stands on top of a high boulder.

That whip is definitely for sheep. It's probably for sheep. It's for sheep, right!?

"'Seep' who don't run are just plain old 'seep' eh, yeah. They just eat grass and get fat and have their fur sheared."

"You say that, but I think the value of sheep is in their fur, Miss Mary. Ah, the value of a man isn't in their fur, though. I don't think these thin legs were made for running around in... whoa."

I had given the thigh of a nearby, gray sheepy a squeeze. Plump and firm.

"…

M-muscles."

The full body, 100% wool disguise was hiding an impressive muscular figure.

"Whaddya think?"

"Forgive me, Chairman."

The young Sheep Master had her hands on her hips and had a look of pride. Surrounded by about five sheep, Wolfram was screaming while they chewed on his blonde hair. The mother apologized to Flynn with a calm smile as she watched from afar.

"I'm sorry, she's always been mischievous eh, yes. Especially since these are the first sheep that Mary's looking after eh, right. She's really excited to teach them eh, yeah. If they get a nice ranking in this tournament, their value as carriage animals will go up eh, yes. Then, they won't be chopped up for meat and they'll be able to enter into sheep races as running 'seep' eh, yes."

No ma'am, I think she's already passed straight through 'mischievous' territory.

Josak got kicked.

"If you cross over into another's lane and get in the way of the 'seep' you'll get kicked right into the sand eh, yeah. While you're racing, the trick is to pass others on the outside, not the inside eh, yeah."

"This is hard... Sheep racing is too hard!"

"It'll be fine! It's 400,000 horse legs to the goal in Lambert. You'll get the hang of it before you get all the way there," Flynn said.

"Horse legs..?"

Even if we do miraculously figure this out before we get all the way there, if we don't master this until we get near the goal it'll be too late. Somehow we have to get the basics down today and learn at least the bare minimum to control the sheep.

I'm starting to feel the pressure. Even though the tournament is tomorrow, my headache and nausea didn't go away with a good night's sleep and I can't even properly prepare for the race. On top of that, this place reeks of kerosene more than livestock.

"Damn, my head hurts."

"Shibuya, why don't you try singing? There was a movie where a pig did that right? A chant to manipulate the sheep. Lamb chop, lamb chop, laaaaamb lamb lamb chop, mutton mutton – like that."

"Guhaah!"

"Whoa, Wolf got kicked! Murata, that song, that's not the right song!"

"Hm, I can't remember it. What was the pig's name? Dave?"

"Okubo... Quit it, I like Spector a lot better. And it's not Dave." (3)

"Babe?"

Ruth. Wait, this isn't a famous name game.

Let's stop trying to use the Great Sage's wisdom when it comes to animals. He grew up in an apartment after all. The only pets he's had are angora guinea pigs and electronic pets. If you consider two mongrel dogs as the descendants of wolves, then I have a slight advantage when it comes to taming wild animals.

"Nmo!"

T-Zou, who had been by my side watching over my progress, slowly gets to her feet. The downy hair on her nose bristles and she lets out a war cry into the sky.

"Nmonmo! Nmonmo! Nmonmosshkamameeeeyoooo!

T-Zou learned a new song! Her repertoire has went up by one.

"The world's... eh!?"

Fifteen sheep fall into step and move to the side. They form a perfect line in front of the non-magic-powered military tank, 'So Light It's Like a Dream.'

"Whoa, that scared me. What happened? T-Zou, what kind of sheep are you? A Merino?"

Light brown face with a white T-Zone. Her rectangular pupils always look like they're laughing. Miss Mary jumps down from her boulder and starts petting the sheep team leader standing at the front.

"Awesome! You're awesome eh, yeah! You're the legendary 'Seep' Queen aren't you, eh!? Yeah!"

The Queen of the Sheep gives a little 'ehe~' snort.

"I don't believe it eh, that the 'Seep' Queen is real eh! I thought it was just a miracle in stories eh, yeah!"

I've never even heard of it in stories. I don't say that retort out loud. After encountering The Sheep Legend, Miss Mary is overcome with emotion.

"If you're here you'll definitely win eh, yeah! There's no way 'seep' will lose to horses eh, yeah. You guys are alright. Your running training is over. You can just leave everything to this one right here eh, yeah!"

"Whoohoo."

After hearing that questionable proclamation that our training course was over, I couldn't put much effort into my shout of joy. I feel conflicted. She would know best, but are we really leaving everything to a sheep? While the Sheep Master was praising T-Zou like Mutsuguro, she stood up straight. (4)

"Okay, next is parallel parking eh! Things will be really crowded during the race eh, yeah."

"Eh!?"

Parallel parking with sixteen sheep. It's scary just thinking about it.

- (1) Aiko Sixteen is a movie from 1983 about this girl named Aiko who was on her high school archery team. Then this other girl also named Aiko joins the team and she's awesome and everyone wants to be like her, but then they find out she used to be pregnant and suicidal. Enatsu's 21 Pitches is a nonfiction essay about the 21 pitches in the ninth inning of a baseball game that Yutaka Enatsu of the Hiroshima Toyo Carps pitched. In short, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YUURI IS TRYING TO SAY HERE O.O I'm thinking he was just saying sports stuff with numbers in the title, but if it's not and you've cracked the reference puzzle, please tell me!
- (2) Mary is mispronouncing the word for sheep, 'hitsuji,' and is instead saying 'shitsuji' which means butler. It is written in a way to signify that it is just how Mary says the word and it is not a pun. Actually, a few other people say 'shitsuji' as well so it seems to be part of the regional dialect. Anyway, because of how the 'hi' sound is pronounced before a 't' sound, 'hitsuji' does actually sound a lot like 'shitsuji' and it can sometimes be hard to hear the difference.
- (3) Hiromoto Okubo is a former player for the Seibu Lions. His nickname was Dave which is why Yuuri just automatically said his name. Dave Spector is a TV producer in Japan from America and he appears as a commentator on a lot of Japanese TV shows as the token white American guy. That being said, he's a pretty cool foreign talent. He's smart and his Japanese is really good and he doesn't act like a super douche. Some of the other foreign talents on TV are

really

embarrassing x.x

(4) To put it simply, Mutsugoro is like the Japanese Steve Irwin. He's also known as Masanori Hata and he was the director of

The Adventures of Milo and Otis

. He's an animal lover and researcher who did all sorts of wacky stuff on TV, but he has also published numerous animal related essays and books, travels around the world a lot and also does a lot of animal paintings.

....*

When watching television, all good children should turn on the lights and watch from a distance. Also, sheep should limit themselves to one hour a day. There is the rare possibility of muscle strain when interacting with sheep.

"Ugh... I messed around too much..."

When I woke up early the next morning, my legs and arms were stiff. I'm not out of shape because I've been doing daily sit-ups and squats, but my body had stiffened and I couldn't get out of bed. It seems that racing with a sheep carriage utilizes muscles not used in baseball.

While I was hunched over in a strange position eating breakfast, Murata designated me as the representative in the written contest.

"Huh!? But my grades in modern language are horrible and I won't be able to read the questions with this country's over-fancy writing!"

"You'll be able to read them if you take your time."

"Even so! I'm bad at writing too. It ends up looking like a snail crawled across the page. Wolf's penmanship is so much better and if the question is about Shimaron literature then Josak would be best because he lived here until he was twelve."

"Lord von Bielefelt seems fairly high-strung. He probably has lovely penmanship. But Shibuya, how is it going to look if the representative for Caloria uses High Demon letters? Won't that leave a bad impression on the examiner?" "Ah, that's uh..."

I look at the back of Wolfram's blonde head. Thanks to the frequent low blood pressure of pretty boys, he's been sitting there collapsed on the table.

"Right? Your unique writing, to put it nicely, can pass for a blank nationality." To put it rudely, it sucks.

"Then Josa..."

"Your Majesty, this is hard to say, but while I was here in this country I didn't receive anything like an education. Therefore, my knowledge is all from The Great Demon Kingdom's military schools and the only books I've read lately are *Poison Lady Anissina*

. I'm a grown adult and it still makes me so scared I don't want to go use the bathroom."

With a 'see?' from my proud friend, I ended up walking towards the assembly hall for the knowledge portion of 'Use your knowledge, speed and skill to win! The World's Best Fighter Tournament.' Only those taking part were allowed to enter and it was like I was being sent off by my parents at a school entrance exam.

Considering that it's a fighting tournament, if you want to win in the 'skill' section you can't just send in regular old prodigies for the written test. Of course, there are probably a few in here who are accomplished in both martial and literary arts, but there is a high percentage of muscles and it feels like the entrance exam to a sports university or a meeting of the heads of all of the sports clubs.

From what I can see, there are just shy of fifty people in their seats. If this is how many teams there are, winning this will be about as hard as Koushien. Flynn has said that 'this is our chance!', but it seems like there are a lot of people here with that attitude. (1)

"Hey! Hey let me say one last thing!"

When I turn around, Murata is shouting just outside the entrance with his hands cupped over his mouth.

"Are you listening!? No matter what happens, be proud of your country's culture and education! Okay!? Don't forget your pride!"

"Yeah yeah."

Murata's voice echoed around the assembly hall. Everyone was now nodding with renewed determination. Don't yell out such useful advice at the top of your lungs. If possible, I'd like you to secretly whisper it to me when the two of us are alone.

When I sit down in a random seat, a man came to silently stand next to the desk. He had his arms crossed over his yellow and white military uniform and had long flowing, soft locks of hair – a Shimaron soldier. I look around in surprise and see that one of them is standing near every seat. Even if this is an anti-cheating measure, this one-on-one system is harsh.

As soon as the scheduled time comes, some cheap paper was passed around. On the top line there was only one short question printed. Just as I thought, I couldn't read it right away. I discreetly close my eyes and run my finger along the question. Thanks to the archaic printing technique, the letters were slightly raised. What a relief. It looks like I'll be able to decipher this. There's no rule prohibiting ESP and other skills so this won't be considered cheating.

'Compose an essay in the provided space below about the history of our great kingdom of Shimaron'

"…

History?"

Even when I say that in English the meaning is the same. It's nice that I was able to read it but now I'm baffled.

This question isn't of a level that has anything to do with me failing world history. There's no way I'd know the history of Shimaron. Like I'd know! I'm fuzzy on my own country's history – now both Japan and The Great Demon Kingdom – so why would I be learning anything about other countries? I'm not proud of it, but I don't even know the name of the president. Um, was it not a presidential government? When I look around, careful to move only my eyeballs, I see that everyone around me is moving their pens. Damn it! This was really a gamble. All

of you are probably those types that say 'Man, I didn't study at all' but you actually study at home all the time. Ah, endless solitude. In this infinitely expanding universe, am I the only one who is unfamiliar with Shimaron's history?

"

Space, the final frontier..."

The scale is too big for the introduction to an explanation of a single country's history.

What did Murata say? 'Be proud of your country's culture and education.' That's useless. That shit – excuse me –

excrement

is useless.

Shimaron has never taken center stage in any of my history classes. That's only natural. There is no country like that on any continent on Earth. Maybe I should just make up something that sounds a lot like this place and pray that there's some stuff that happens to match up. If it subjugated an entire continent, maybe I should use Napoleon as a model and then just change out all the pronouns. Or maybe Alexander the Great.

"It's no use... I can only remember a face that looks like Sylvester Stallone..."

I'm such an idiot.

Now that it's come to this I have to use my last resort – the plan that many desperate college students have used to get through hundreds of tough spots. According to my older brother, you should at least write this down when the answer isn't in your head.

"'How to make delicious curry'... there. First, cut an onion into slices the width of a pinkie finger... and slowly fry them with oil in a frying pan until they turn golden brown..."



I don't know if this is true or not, but this seems to be worth academic credits in my brother's university. However, if the professor doesn't like carrots, they

won't read it if you include them in the recipe. In exams for religious classes, you have to pay attention to what meat you use.

In order to fill up the huge answer section, I write every last ounce of knowledge I have. Garam masala, nutmeg, turmeric, naan bread, chapathi bread, pickled vegetables. Subtle seasonings of chocolate and instant coffee. The differences between Indian style curry and European curry and their deliciousness. The scientific theory about why it's milder the next day, how to heat it if there are potatoes included, uses for leftover roux and how to store it, even why you must absolutely never feed curry to dogs. I'm pouring all of the curry trivia I've accumulated during my sixteen years of eating habits into this critical moment.

When my answer sheet was filled in with black, the pen in my right hand was covered in sweat. I had been staring so intently that both of my eyes hurt. I have an absolutely ludicrous sense of accomplishment.

"Phew."

I'm even breathing roughly through my nose. When someone who looks like a supervisor rang a bell, the soldier standing next to me picked up my answer sheet. He seems to be serving as an examiner as well as he just starts to scan through it. The man reading my answer is making troubled sounds.

"…

Mm... huh... umm... This is... unique writing."

"It's delicious," I say hopefully in a small voice.

"So you compared our country's liberation and unification history as well as the influx of foreign cultures adding to our elevation to an even more advanced civilization to a local dish...?"

That was an unexpected, favorable interpretation. It's nothing so extravagant, but you must try making it at home at least once.

"Hm, splendid! You can leave immediately."

"Seriously!? This passed!?"

"Seriously!"

I kicked back my chair to stand up, grabbed my coat and ran off. Strangely, there were only a few people leaving and the majority of the examinees were sitting in their seats with irritated looks on their faces.

"I wonder why."

"They envy the history of the great kingdom of Shimaron and have foolish points of view. They wrote as if they blindly believe their own countries were just and completely lack gratitude and respect for the blessings we bestowed upon them."

"Ahah, I see."

They irritated the examiners. But, I can understand how they feel. Even if they're ordered to praise the people who subjugated them, it's not something they can do easily. Even though they've prepared themselves for the important race coming up, the resentment they had pent up came gushing forth at this petty occasion. With some trivial words...

"Ah!"

I slowly replay Murata's speech.

Be proud of your country's culture and history. One more time. Beeeeeeeee prooooooud ooooooof yoooouuuur coooooountry's... including echoes.

Was it Murata's fault that those people got riled up and criticized Shimaron? "No, there's no way. No way."

In the first place, the advice to be proud is meaningless to me since I know hardly anything about this world's history... Was that advice not meant for me, but was instead meant to rile up everyone?

"N-no way, no way, there's just no way."

Anyway, I'm lucky. Because I don't know much about the circumstances here, I was able to write down an answer that the examiner was pleased with. It's not a very pleasing strategy, but when in Rome, do as the Romans do. Memorize the recipe for curry.

It's cloudy when I run outside and the area was full of parallel-parked racing vehicles. Each team had their own lead animals tethered up.

Horses, cows, dogs, wild boars, macho men.

"Hey!"

I swing around my coat and run towards the flock of soothing animals.

"I'm awesome! I am

SO

awesome... What are you doing, Flynn?"

The stout-hearted female feudal lord from Caloria had tied up her silver hair and was wearing a plain cap. Accompanied by the young Sheep Master, Miss Mary, she was gripping a pair of enormous sewing shears. It's the most dangerous item in a common citizen's sewing kit.

"Wait! We can talk this over!"

"I was just about to shear T-Zou's fur. This is an ancient battle pattern passed down amongst the Plainsmen. See, I did her face too."

There were eyebrows drawn on the face that was forcibly turned in my direction. Eyebrows like the kind people draw on dogs. Seeing T-Zou's face turned into an old man's gag drains me of all of my strength.

"You're going to shear her too? Well, sheep

are

around for their wool but don't do it. It'd be too sad if she ended up like a poodle in this cold weather," I said as I pushed my way through the tons of sheep. "Isn't that right, T-Zo- whoa!"

Three unlucky numbers have appeared on her creamy skin.

666

"Okay yeah, don't shear her! No, no, no!"

"Eh? This is a very lucky number."

"The sheep are fine as they are. Anyway Flynn, we're off to Lambert. It's a shame that women can't watch, but you should wait on the Dugald ship because it will be safe there."

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"Okay."
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I scrambled up into the tank. Flynn turns her head towards me and extends her hand.

"I'll put on a good show as Norman Gilbit. Then your husband's reputation will go up too. Caloria's social status might improve a bit as well."

"...

Why are you willing to go so far?"

Our cold fingers almost touch, but we miss each other by a few millimeters.

When it comes to talking about her country, she loses her confidence and the tone of her voice falls. I don't have confidence either. I don't think I can properly answer that question.

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"Well... I don't know."
Why? I wonder why.
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"Hey!"

An official whose uniform looked like it was about to burst at the seams around his chest came near with an accusatory look. The only thing cute about him was his waist-length, curly hair.

"Josak, you drive."

"Hey you there in the 'seep' carriage! Wait! There's obviously a problem with your weight. Unless you add to your load you will be violating the rules of fair play."

Well since it's called 'So Light It's Like a Dream,' it's probably much lighter than the other racing vehicles. But there were no regulations on the weight of the vehicle's body and we didn't have to report how much the riders weighed to anyone.

Wondering how we're going to get through this situation, I give a low groan as I grip the reins. In the meantime, several racing vehicles started moving one by one. Inside the horse-drawn carriage that passed by our side, I caught sight of Maxine and the beautiful twins. In my impatience, I couldn't think of a good

plan.

"Okay, then we'll take on some luggage for a handicap... gah!"

"Murata!?"

When I look around, I see that the soldier serving as an official has wrapped up my friend in a blanket and is tossing him in as luggage. Things might be going as he planned because he's now holding his sides as he laughs wholeheartedly. Surprised by the sudden impact and indecent laughing, the sheep start running all at once.

"Whoah! Where-where are these guys going!? Not that way! Don't turn right, go straight!"

"I forgot to tell you eh, yeah! 'Seep' have no sense of direction eh, yeah! You have to control them well eh, okay!"

Sheep have an extremely bad sense of direction!? Tell us important information like that before we make an agreement!

"It can't be helped, Shibuya. Lambs getting lost is just common knowledge. It was even written in the Bible 2000 years ago."

"I'm Buddhist so I don't know anything about that!"

When I pull on the reins with all of my might, T-Zou takes notice and turns back for a split second.

"Nmoshkashte (Wrong way)?"

When the leader adjusts her angle, they all promptly return to the proper course. That's a relief. Just as one would expect from the legendary sheep, Queen of the Sheep, the sheep with 666 on her back.

Murata throws a wet blanket on my compliments.

"Huh? But that might be 999. Galaxy Express Sheep-9." (2)

If it was 777 then either coins or feces would start pouring out.

⁽¹⁾ Baseball reference, of course~ Koushien here refers to the Summer

Koushien (the National High School Baseball Championship) in which 49 schools participate. It's held in Koushien Stadium, hence the nickname, and it is a major televised sports event in Japan. I don't even like baseball and I ended up watching it. You can't escape XD

(2) Mini joke on Galaxy Express 999 which is an anime/manga. The 999 is pronounced 'Three-Nine' so 'Sheep-9' fits nicely ^-^ The story is about this guy who is travelling on a train (999) running through space in order to obtain a mechanized body at the train's last stop and thus live forever.

And there is chapter 7. I told you the random was strong XD

Next Chapter -->

Tags: kkm translation, novel 7

Current Location: <u>Home!</u>
Current Mood: nostalgic

Current Music: Shingeki no Kyojin OST

KKM Novel 7, Chapter 8

<-- Previous Chapter

So I know this took longer than usual but I'm hoping that how incredibly interesting this chapter is makes up for that! (even though everyone is literally just sitting around a campfire the entire chapter XD)

Mini-warning! There are some gory things mentioned in this chapter that might gross some people out. It doesn't just jump out at you though; you totally see it coming.

The illustration for this chapter is from

Portrait of a Demon King

. That being said, I couldn't help but notice that everyone's position in the illustration is the opposite of where they were described to be in the text:)

Chapter 8

The sheep have travelled to a far away desert.

I sing my own silly parody of a song in a low voice so I don't wake anyone up. The moon is pale and high in the sky. Is it about four days until the full moon?

The way to the finals in the royal capital of Big Shimaron, Lambert, isn't actually a desert. It is a rough landscape with hard yellow earth and scarce grasses. There is a road covered with wheel tracks made for carriages, but since there are rocks and deep ruts and even vegetation covering it depending on the area, it's not a road that we can drive down carefree. A moment's negligence can result in a wheel popping off or some other accident. The leader of Team 'Seep' T-Zou was courageous, but the ones riding were under more stress than the ones running.

Murata reached peak exhaustion from our forced march and collapsed in the cargo hold of 'So Light It's Like a Dream' wrapped up tightly in a blanket. I hear his systematic breathing. It seems it's warm and comfortable in there. After

volunteering to be the first lookout, Wolfram has leaned against my shoulder and is now snoring. His blonde hair is shining copper in the light of the flames.

The sheep have short sleep cycles and they grouped together in fours and fives to hunker down.

I'm absentmindedly gazing at the dancing flames with a piece of firewood gripped in my hand. Night in the wilderness is even dryer and colder than the daytime. Everyone's breath is white. My head is still heavy, but my nausea is subsiding somewhat. At the very least I was even able to eat the field rations we had for dinner.

"It seems like none of our comrades are nearby," Josak said as he came back to the fireside and sat opposite of me. It was just a mere thirty minutes ago that he'd went to take his turn as lookout. He's an experienced soldier so he can keep surveillance on our surroundings by himself. The novices can just go to sleep.

"You can't sleep?"

"Yeah, I've just, I've been thinking about what's going to happen next. At any rate, I never imagined that sheep would have no sense of direction. They're all sleeping happily right now, though."

"You Young Masters were all raised in castles so it must be hard camping out in the wilderness."

His orange hair, combed back carelessly, looks bright red in the light of the flames.

"Murata and I didn't have a sheltered upbringing. Wolfram is a prince so he might have been brought up in a castle with a bunch of servants."

"That's true, but His Excellency is considered a soldier as well. He might have been mostly put in charge of logistical support, but he has some experience with camping out. I'm more concerned about Your Majesty and His Highness. If anything happens to either of you, I might end up burned at the stake or being dismembered."

Josak jokingly placed his hands on the sides of his face. It was meant to complement his mocking tone, but there's something in his eyes that I can't laugh at and dismiss.

"Pink-eared poison rabbits appear in these lands. You look at them and think 'Oh! They're so pink and cute!' and reach a hand out to them and then they chomp down with their big mouths."

"Chomp..."

Shimaron Quest has finally begun. It seems like the reason their ears and mouths are pink is 'so they can hear and eat a lot.' That's all well and good, but don't leave out '-ra.' (1)

"How unlucky am I to get stuck guarding the both of you at the same time? On the dawn of your honorable and safe repatriation, I humbly request you consider bestowing a special award upon the hard worker Josak Gurrier."

"l'll

consider it."

Naturally, Captain Sizemore, Dacascos, and a number of the Dugald soldiers are making their way to Lambert as we speak. Be that as it may, contacting them during the race would be a serious violation of the rules regarding supplies. They have been forced into keeping pace with us on side roads while making their best guess as to our position. To put it bluntly, all they have to rely on is their intuition.

"But you know, those Dugalds

are

unrivalled on the seas, but when you throw them on land they turn into amateurs. Sizemore can still get around on the field, but... honestly, why did His Animal-Loving Excellency send those guys to search for Your Majesty? Does he really have no faith in me?"

"Animal-loving? Are you talking about Gwen?"

"That's right. He's been sending me pigeons ever since I got in contact with you. If it was my Commander here and not me, His Knitting Excellency would probably have had more faith, huh? Well, for the moment it's best to have as many guards as possible. We

are

talking about Your Majesty, His Highness and the other Young Master after all."

"Sorry for being a trio."

"You should be~"

Josak Gurrier hasn't changed very much since the first time I met him. We're quite literally in a king-subordinate relationship, but he cracks jokes without hesitation. If you pay attention to the way he speaks, it's not only

not

respectful, but can sometimes be rude. Even so, he is a man who is worthy of trust and I think that he acknowledges me nowadays. I'm just arbitrarily thinking that, though. Above all, Josak was Conrad's childhood friend and he has been thoroughly endorsed by Lord Weller.

There is no better acknowledgment than that.

"And on top of that, this time you're pretending to be the representative of a foreign country and are participating in a tournament in an enemy country. I can't believe it. Someone help! Stop the sheephardy king!"

And there it is: an expression used only in The Great Demon Kingdom. Normally, people would say 'foolhardy.' (2)

Josak uses a dry branch to poke at the fire before snapping it in two and throwing it in. His lips, dyed scarlet red, lift in amusement.

"... Well, I decided to abide by whatever bizarreness you set out on."

"Did Conrad tell you to do so?"

"By my Commander... by Lord Weller? No, no, not at all. Even without being instructed, the majority of the demons feel that way."

"'My Commander."

I wanted something warm so I poured some hot water from the kettle into a cup. When I moved to drink it as is, Josak fished out a tea bag for me from the food bag.

"You say that a lot, 'My Commander'... Thank you, I can do that myself. Are

you talking about Conrad? The Commander thing."

"Well, yes. Although, now he's got a quiet personality and is relatively harmless. Way back when, he was an intimidating and terrifying man."

"When he was the Lion of Luttenberg?"

Josak gave a look of surprise as he took my cup away. "You've heard. That's right, The Young Lion of Luttenberg. His father took up residence there after all. Or perhaps I should say the area was a region where a lot of humans lived near the western border of The Great Demon Kingdom. It's the name of that place. Originally the people who lived there... I wonder if it's alright to talk about this. Your big sister would just hate to get in trouble later~"

Josak had suddenly switched to his big sister voice and put on a little act. It was a signal that we can stop right here. We're right on the dividing line where I can pretend I didn't hear anything.

"I'd like to hear it, if possible. If you do get in trouble, I can pretend I heard it from Wolf."

"Well that's kind of you. But, I wouldn't mind if you said that I told you. It's Lord Weller's fault for not being here."

As he handed the cup now filled with black tea back to me, the orange-haired man gazed out into the expanding darkness.

"... It was right around here, huh. No, it might be more to the west. Several decades ago, people lived here. It might be easier to say that they were kept here rather than they lived here. They were surrounded by fences in all directions and there were guards making sure no one left."

"Kept? What, was it some sort of facility?"

"Well, I suppose you could call it a facility. At the very least, it was called a 'village.' The residents were all humans who had slept with demons and the mixed children born as a result. Shimaron and... at the time it hadn't been split into Big and Small and this place wasn't occupied territory. Around the time when the relations between The Great Demon Kingdom and The Kingdom of Shimaron became turbulent, all those involved with demons were hunted down and a village was made in this wasteland. There really is nothing here and most

of the people were random women. My mother was a human who was with a demon for a short while, but as soon as he left for somewhere she immediately moved into a house with a human man. She didn't say a word about having a child with a demon. I was left in the care of a church or a temple or something, but my growth was slower than normal. Compared to a human child at age ten, I still had the body of a five year old... Don't worry, Your Majesty. In two years I'd have a sudden growth spurt and not only would I catch up, nowadays I have these huge breasts. But that aside, it was obvious that I was part demon. So, I was brought to the village."

Josak places his own cup of tea on the ground and lifts his face, illuminated by the flames.

"Your Highness, I thought you had gone to sleep."

"I thought it would be unfair if I were the only one who didn't take a turn as lookout."

Still wrapped up tightly in the thick blanket, Murata sits to my right. Wolfram stirs and shifts his body, pushing his head even more against my shoulder. It's okay, you sleep.

"Were you talking about an internment camp?"

"It's a boring story."

"No, I want to hear. The owners of my soul haven't lived in this world for a long time. Shibuya, there were similar situations in America during World War II. I'm sure you know already, but people of Japanese descent were gathered together and held captive in a harsh environment. It was said to be for their safety, but frankly it was because no one knew when they were going to betray the country."

I didn't know that. When it comes to discrimination in World War II, I only knew about the most infamous and horrible example.

Josak puts new tea leaves in the pot in order to make tea for Murata as well. The national traits of my kingdom must be somewhat refined for there to be a tea set in an ultra-lightweight military tank.

"It was a life where we didn't even have the luxury of having a cup of tea every

day. It was amazing if we had water and barley. Compared to those days, being in the army was like heaven. I lived in that village until I was twelve. One night during the summer I was about to turn thirteen, several humans came under the cover of darkness and freed us all. I'll never forget the black shadows riding on horseback, silhouetted by the moon. 'Those who want to stay can stay, but those who decide to live according to the other blood in their body should come with us across the ocean'... that's what Dunheely Weller said. He had a son around ten who looked like he still couldn't travel on his own."

"I see, he was Lord Weller," Murata said.

"That's right. I'd never have dreamed that he was the son of royalty. Dunheely Weller swiftly got us onto a boat, brought us back to The Great Demon Kingdom, and set us up on a modest plot of land that he had been given. According to rumor, he had graciously entered into a loving relationship with the king of the demons and had been given a part of her land. That was Luttenberg. It's amazing if you think about it. A man with the tattoo of an exile on his left arm had married a queen in the land that he washed up in." (3)

"An exile!?" Wolfram reacted to my voice as he leaned on my shoulder and almost woke up. However, his drowsiness soon took over and he instantly closed his eyes. "Whoops... Conrad's father was exiled? In other words, he was someone who had committed some atrocious crime?"

"Who knows? I never asked. He seems to have been from a long lineage celebrated for their swordsmanship. Anyway, The Great Demon Kingdom was very different than Shimaron. We weren't restricted and we were free to travel around to a degree. Unlike this wasteland, the land was fertile and there were those who cultivated crops and settled down and those who made use of their experience from Shimaron to become craftsmen. If one desired, they could move to other areas and find appropriate work. There were elderly people who joined the military and even women who found new families. This was all thanks to Lady Celi's doctrine of free love."

Viva Free Love! The result of that wonderful love murmurs some inaudible gibberish in his sleep.

"Lord Weller... oh, Conrad is the only one called 'Lord.' Even though he had

human blood, his mother was the Demon King, after all. It was only natural that her son would receive a high social status. Although at that point in time he was treated as lower class and he wasn't even at the level of an upper-class noble. If he would have just taken his mother's name he would have been able to become a member of the ten noble families. It's those sorts of things about him that I just don't understand. If it was me, I'd have taken the Spitzweg name without a moment's hesitation. But anyway, Lord Weller and I were close in age so we had our coming of age ceremony around the same time and left for the capital to enlist in the army. Well, as a low ranking soldier I only had to go through the motions and had a fairly easy time and got to complain that 'the sergeant is annoying' and 'training is hard,' but it seems like he had to go through the naval academy and officer training surrounded by young nobles and thus had to deal with all sorts of issues."

"It's a society I can't imagine in modern Japan... although there's definitely some phony celebrities here," Murata said as he narrowed his eyes and moaned. I guess he's remembering something from somewhere in his distant memories of a hierarchical society.

"Well because of that there were ups and downs, but we were assigned to the same unit... Of course, we were a common soldier and a military cadet so I was Lord Weller's subordinate. After that we ended up inseparable by a stroke of luck and became comrades who sipped broth from the same saucepan." (4)

In Japanese that would be 'eat out of the same pot.'

"I see, so that was the Luttenberg Division-"

"No Your Majesty, it wasn't!" Josak vehemently denied this, interrupting my admiration. It's strange for him to be this serious. However, when he repeated those words, there was another emotion mixed in. "That absolutely wasn't it."

"It's hard to talk about," Murata said.

"... Yeah, definitely. Because in a way, it's a disgrace to the kingdom."

The Great Sage who has been reincarnated on Earth lately and looks like he hopes to run a column in an occult magazine has been concentrating solely on information gathering. It's like an illness that you catch when you talk about it. Not being able to withstand the silent demand, Josak gives a small sigh.

"You know that the demons were at war until the ceasefire around twenty years ago, right? You heard that from Teacher GüGüGü or the former Crown Prince, right?"

"GüGüGü... You mean Günter? Yeah, I've heard that."

"Then what about the danger of losing the war?"

"It looked like you were about to lose, is that it?"

I hadn't thought about it. Ever since the first time I came to this world I've been screaming that I'm against war. Abandon war, pacifism, I've constantly emphasized those ideological thoughts. But war is something I've never experienced and have never known its pain. Cruelty, heartlessness, tragedy, I didn't come to know of all these evils with my own body. I've only been taught solely through lessons and textbooks that war is evil.

Parents, teachers, newspapers, television, movies, books, videos, celebrity comments, stories from grandparents, stone monuments you don't notice as you walk by, museums, archives, paintings, photographs. I've only been taught that people shouldn't fight and kill each other from the various things around me.

I believe that is right. Of course, I am confident of that.

But in my sixteen years of life, I have not found myself on a battlefield and taken someone's life. I've never relished in the joy of victory nor experienced the humiliation of a defeat. Although, I have no intent – ever – to experience either of those things...

"That means it looked like you were about to lose? The Great Demon Kingdom?"

"It seemed that way no matter how you looked at it."

There is a winner and a victor in nearly all wars. Of course, Japan has also suffered defeat. But somehow, it's hard to put in words, but I couldn't see myself accepting the reality that my country – and the country I govern, at that – would be about to lose.

I can't even imagine what the loser would go through.

And yet, the man in front of me has survived an actual battleground. No, not just him. Many of the demons I've met since coming to this world have lived through that time. Günter and Gwendal and Miss Anissina and Conrad who's not here.

Even Wolfram, leaning on me as he sleeps, has experienced life and death situations.

"I just can't imagine it... It was only twenty years ago, yeah? I wasn't born yet, but my older brother was in my mom's stomach. It's so recent, but... to think my own country was about to lose."

"At the time, the Shimaron army had landed in the southwest of the continent and was quickly advancing north by conquering two small, powerless countries. After one more city, if Arnold fell, the Shimaron army would have easily broken through our borders and a decisive battle would have inevitably been fought inside the country. However, our main forces were scattered in the Grantz territory in the north and in the Karbelnikoff territory on the coast. Even if soldiers were spared for Arnold it would have still been a defensive battle and we would have been short-handed in both areas. In any case, the military strengths weren't the same. Shimaron had taken over most of the continent so their number of soldiers was unimaginably higher. On the other hand, we had no alliances with other countries. We had no plan so we thought it would be best to abandon Arnold and meet the enemy within the country."

Josak stared at the now cold contents of his cup. The image of the moon floated on its surface.

"Her Previous Majesty left everything to her older brother Stuffel with the reason that she was inexperienced in politics. Lady Celi certainly did have a heavy burden, but she shouldn't have left everything to a regent. She should have made some decisions by herself and listened to the opinions of others, but... by the time a request for reinforcements to hold back the enemy at Arnold was made... everyone thought it was too late. It was right around that time that G-... a person gave improper counsel to Stuffel. Completely groundless, cowardly counsel. Lord von Voltaire was out beyond the Grantz territory so it was the perfect opportunity."

There was a strong hatred mixed in with his voice. The image of the moon swayed on the surface of the red liquid.

In my place, Murata asked the question.

"What did he say?"

"... That he had doubts about their fealty."

I'm not good with words I don't hear often. Fealty? Is that something important to everyday life? This isn't the feudal era.

Josak's voice is low, bitter.

"He had doubts about the fealty of those with human blood to the kingdom, The True King, and to the Demon King."

"... That's... like Shimaron."

"Yes, it was the same. They same. They thought that since half of the blood of the enemy was running through their veins, there was the possibility they would betray... damn it!"

The cup breaks.

"So what if we have human blood!? So our oath to live as demons can be swayed by something like that!? So we'll betray our country, the land we love, our fellow countrymen and our trusted companions just because we have enemy blood!? But Stuffel used those words. It was the perfect opportunity for him as well. He could reduce the number of people who could take away some of his status and authority by at least one... I apologize, Your Majesty, Your Highness. I lost my composure."

"That's okay. You don't have to apologize for that."

When Josak continued, his voice had become calm again.

"... We... especially him... we couldn't stay quiet. We couldn't let things be like that. If we stayed quiet and endured that humiliation, things would eventually go back to how they were before. We didn't want to experience the same treatment in The Great Demon Kingdom that we had to endure in Shimaron. There were women and children and new families and even those who had been born in the kingdom. We couldn't let them all suffer through that. Dunheely

Weller who helped us cross the ocean wouldn't have wanted that either. For Conrad... For Lord Weller, there was only one choice left. Prove our fealty. To the kingdom, to The True King, to all the citizens. He would prove our absolute fealty with his life."



"Yes, that was the Luttenberg Division. All of the soldiers with mixed blood from all over the kingdom gathered together. Among them were rookies who hadn't even finished training and young amateurs. Everyone had gathered to give their lives to save the kingdom. If we could gain trust through fighting boldly, the weak wouldn't have to suffer. We thought they wouldn't have to be subject to prejudice and discrimination. It was a special division composed of those with human blood... We set out to the most important yet most hopeless battleground... Arnold, on the brink of defeat. Think about it, although he hadn't become a high level noble, he was still the legitimate child of the king. There was no need for him to choose death. There was no precedent for His Highness to set out to a battle with no hope of survival. Stuffel commanded him to and Lord Weller said it would be an honor... The outcome of the battle was decided the moment we arrived. Even with the new recruits, we had a little less than 4000 and the enemy had more than 30,000... It was hell."

I desperately tried to calm the trembling of my body in order to not wake up Wolfram.

"Arnold was hell. The Shimaron army had exorcists, but they didn't have much war potential on demon lands. We were also sent soldiers who could use magic, but due to the catastrophic state of the war, there weren't very many soldiers left who were skilled in powerful magic. They could just barely use healing magic. They had no use in combat. In the end, it was a swordfight. For those soldiers using light swords, after they cut several bodies they would become useless. The blade would dull with fat. For those using axes and heavy swords, the hilts would break and they wouldn't be able to hold them anymore. When that happened, they would throw away their weapon and take the weapon emblazoned with the Shimaron coat of arms from whatever soldier they just killed. If there was a corpse of a comrade nearby and it was grasping a bloodless sword, they would use that as well. When that became useless they would take another. When that became useless they would take yet another weapon. In the end, no one was using demon arms. Ironically, a large amount of the enemy was taken out with the weapons they themselves had forged. And that's not all. The worst part was that, by the hands of people who had the same human blood as them, they...

There's the possibility that if you looked up their family trees, there might have been distant relatives among the enemy. I might have killed a child or grandchild or nephew of my mother's new family without even knowing."

With a look that seemed as if he might smile gently, Josak's flame-colored eyelashes pressed together.

"... Even so, we didn't waver. Enemies and allies fell on top of each other and there were so many corpses you couldn't see the ground. The grass shone red and, in the places you could see it, the ground was pitch black. There was no time to avoid legs and arms and even if they were still alive you had to step across the fallen to move forward. Arnold was hell, but at the same time it was equal. Whatever blood flowed in their body, not a single person doubted their allies and soldiers who had just met the night before entrusted their backs to each other. That was what we wished for. Equality, faith. In the end, we slaughtered the enemy until their numbers were less than a thousand and forced them into a miraculous retreat. But many of our comrades had died as well. Even if we survived, most of us were weak and wounded.

"What was especially tragic was that the new recruits we had sought to protect by ordering them to retreat early had been drawn into another skirmish, but... Anyway, there were next to none in the battalion who were able to return in good health... Even Lord Weller had sustained injuries so severe he couldn't move and he had half given up on life and ordered the few survivors to return without him."

Out of the scars he had shown me, the one on his side was the worst. The person in question had laughed and said that he just kept walking while holding his guts in. Just by remembering the twisted skin, the same spot on my body aches.

"We lost many, but we defended Arnold in the southwest to the last and prevented the enemy from advancing. Using this opportunity, The Great Demon Kingdom made a comeback and the tides turned in the Grantz and Karbelnikoff territories. We didn't pursue the enemy into their territory, but in naval battles the Dugald family and Roberski's fleet of unsinkable battleships used their power to corner the Shimaron forces. The reason we eventually reached a ceasefire was because we won at Arnold. We believe that. In fact, with the sheer amount of

honor from that military achievement, Lord Weller gained a social status equal to the ten noble families. It was this that Stuffel had not desired and it had been approved with unanimous acceptance at a special conference. He had set out to get rid of the threat to his political power and had instead bestowed upon him an unshakeable position. However, it seems like my Commander had no interest in social class. Not that I ever asked him personally, but it seems there was something even more important that had happened."

"By the time Conrart had returned..."

The weight from my shoulder had lifted. When I turn my head, there was intelligence and strength shining in Wolfram's eyes.

My left shoulder suddenly grows cold.

"... Julia had died. And ever since then, Conrart has never attempted to return to military service."

"Oh, did we wake you?"

"Of course. There's no way I'd be able to sleep peacefully with all that fearful trembling. You really are a coward if a story has you scared."

By Julia he probably means Lady Suzanna Julia von Wincott. Was a woman that wasn't even his lover that important to Conrad? It might have been adultery... I swallow the question that I hesitate to even ask.

Now that he was facing the younger brother of the person caught up in all of that, Josak's expression softened. Now he really has to pay attention to what he can and cannot say.

"That's right, he had finally gained the social status he should have started with, but then Lord Weller abandoned his successful career in the military. Not only that, he returned to his previous status and now," for a short moment, he hesitated. "... He decided that there was no better life than protecting His Majesty. And here I am, not having anything else to fall back upon, without my direct superior. Now I'm serving under Lord von Voltaire, for lack of any choice. Even now there are still a lot of people who want to see Lord Weller reinstated. The sheer amount of those who want to work under him is endless... Well, that's not unreasonable. He would lead attacks to cut through enemy lines while

roaring out a war cry, he was strong even when wounded, the way he pulled his sword from an enemy corpse. His unwavering gaze that only faced forward. He knew who he should protect, but his figure splattered in blood was ferocious. If one saw that part of him easily mistaken for a monster of war, they would want to run towards the very brink of life and death for that man."

Like a scene in a movie, I imagined an image tinged with red. A national hero in near jeopardy brings to mind flames and the scent of blood. Josak Gurrier held back his tone with a slightly self-derisive look.

"Not a single person there wavered in the slightest in giving up their life. It's likely that Lord Conrart Weller is the pride of Luttenberg."

Forever.

You could almost hear in his voice the word he didn't say.

"But..." without thinking of the situation, I murmur to the fire. "But I don't like that Conrad."

After I say this, I notice the dumbfounded looks the two demons are giving me.

"Uh, did I say something inappropriate!?"

Josak gave a vague smile and Wolfram said 'damn wimp' to the sky. I don't know if he was astounded or if he agreed with me, but to my right Murata clapped twice.

"Huh?"

For just a moment, something cold touched my nose. It melted immediately and became a water droplet. I take off my smooth leather glove and hold up my warm palm to the sky. Small, light and feathery objects are swaying back and forth as they fall.

"It's snow."

"Snow!? Snow is yet another problem. It was hard running around in this wilderness as it was, now the weather is against us."

"Hm, it would be hard even for horses to run in the snow. Sheep seem to be strong against the cold, but I hope it doesn't pile up on the road."

I look up at the ultramarine sky. It was like the pure white flakes were falling directly from the moon.

It happened when we all sluggishly stood up to get into the vehicle to keep from getting wet.

"Nmokin!"

"Uwah!"

That weird noise travels through all sixteen sheep. Nmokin, nmokin, nmokin, nmokin! Maybe I should jump in and ask who the monkey was. (5)

The sheep stand one by one, eyes wide open. Their eyes are shining a fiery red and showed that it was a bad situation.

"Look, they're kinda changing shape!?"

Their fluffy wool lost its form and was plastered down their bodies. The 100% Wool poofs had turned into what looked like greasy, swept back, old man hair. The snow falling on them slipped right off and went straight to the ground.

"Transform! Snow Mode! Is that it? Whoah, their eyes, their eyeballs are red."

"So sheep are strong against bad weather. And then there's the time. Are they nocturnal?" Murata asked as he looked up at the sky. He checked the position of the stars and then grabbed my arm to look at my digital analog just to make sure. It's just before 3am.

"Or maybe they're super-early morning animals... But doesn't it seem like they're ready to run away? Going just by the moonlight is a bit unsettling, but the strategy of gaining as much distance as we can before the snow piles up might be a good one. Should we get moving?"

"What place were we in right now?" Josak asks.

We had received a fourth place stamp at the checkpoint we passed earlier in the evening. At the time, the distance between us and the lead was a little over 12,000 horse legs. It's not a distance we can't close. We knew where our opponent was.

"Shibuya, do you know how to go in the dark?"

"Nope."

Muraemon dug through the cargo area of the tank and pulled out a tube the size of his fist. Tada! (6)

"A magic-powered telescope! If you pull on this joint here, it'll turn into a handy sized telescope. It's small but works perfectly, here here, the origin of the magic-power is right in here. That way you can use it no matter where you are on the planet. If you're travelling with children in Shimaron and want to look at the scenery and go, 'Oh darn, there's no magic here,' you won't have to worry that your child will say 'Daddy, you're the worst!' Also, when you want to observe wild animals or use it at night, look here. Night-vision comes standard so even in the dark, you won't miss anything. If you act now, you get this attractive case, lens cleaner, and this fashionable strap, all for the price of 24,000 pesos! Of course, we'll take care of the shipping charges!"

Toll Free: 0120-Shimaron Soldiers Have Long Hair. (7)

Are you trying to sell this to me!?

- (1) Reference to the RPG series, Dragon Quest. There are a few different rabbit enemies. As for '-ra,' a few spell names in the Japanese version of Dragon Quest are the more powerful version of a certain spell if '-ra' is tacked on the end. Although, I think this is more common in the Final Fantasy series.
- (2) The word for 'foolhardy' in Japanese is 'chototsumoushin' which literally translated means 'a wild boar charging madly ahead.' Josak swaps out the 'wild boar' part (cho) with 'sheep' (hitsuji) and then Yuuri comments on that in his head, "Normally, people would use 'wild boar' there."
- (3) It's been a while since I last mentioned this so I figured I'd reiterate that the ruler of The Great Demon Kingdom is referred to as a king even if they're a woman. Although Josak

does

call her a queen in this chapter right after calling her a king so I dunno what's up with that. Maybe it's supposed to show his ex-Shimaronian-ness. Totally just made that word up XD

- (4) Linguistic note! And not on the saucepan thing because that's fairly self explanatory~ The word for inseparable here (kusare en) has the connotation that the inseparability wasn't desired. In fact, the literal English translation means something along the lines of 'rotten destiny.' So, you kind of get the feeling they got off to a bad start.
- (5) If you say 'nmokin' a bunch of times it starts to kind of sound like monkey, written here in Katakana English as 'monkii.'
- (6) Yuuri is comparing Murata to Doraemon, which is this blue cat from the future in a manga of the same name. He has all these wacky gadgets, kind of like Inspector Gadget.
- (7) Murata made this joke earlier in the novel when they met the ambassadors from Big Shimaron in Gilbit and they were looking at their hair. It's a joke on the mnemonics commercials and companies use to help customers remember their telephone numbers, but this one doesn't actually make a number.

And there is chapter 8! So the reason I love this chapter – besides how interesting the information is – is because Josak's backstory is the first we get to hear that's significantly different than the anime version. In the anime, Josak and his mother were thrown into that 'village' where his mother got sick and died then Dunheely and Conrad came and saved them all and a friendship was formed. But here Josak's mother abandoned him, Josak got sent to the village alone, and he and Conrad didn't even interact with each other until they were assigned to the same military unit later on in life. And then there's the fact that we actually get to hear some info on the war. It's like it's been this huge secret up until now. (Also, Dunheely has got to be the strangest name in this entire series)

Anyway, see you all next chapter! Although, it's Thanksgiving and my birthday this week sooooo, probably won't be working on it at all during the next few days:/

Next Chapter -->

Tags: kkm translation, novel 7

Current Location: Home!

Current Mood: rushed

Current Music: DOA from the Attack on Titan OST

KKM Novel 7, Chapter 9

<-- Previous Chapter

DUN DUN DUN!! Finished it! YES! It was hard going for a while. My cat knocked a bit of water onto my laptop and brought the grand total of non-functioning keys to 5. Also, sometimes I need to hit the u/j/m key 3 or 4 times before it actually types the letter (note: some words might be randomly missing u's j's and/or m's XD). My poor laptop. She's so old :(

Anyway, enough of that! On to the chapter!

Chapter 9

"Huge ditch straight ahead! Evasive maneuvers to the right!"

"Roger!"

"A small herd of nocturnal animals closing in from the north! Reduce our velocity and pass through them!"

The super-compact, magic-powered telescope – most likely invented by Miss Anissina – was very effective for travelling at night. I was sitting next to Josak in the driver's seat functioning as the rallying navigator. If we avoid the bumps and ditches in the road, that will reduce the risk of one of our wheels flying off. Even if we're only temporarily gaining ground, it's an effective way of driving.

"Get close to the center of those lined up rocks and pass through them with a hard left... The snow's started to pile up for real, huh? If it keeps going like this, the wheels might get pulled off and we won't be able to move. We did pass that one carriage getting repaired back there... ah!"

"What's wrong?"

I reflexively take my eye away from the telescope. I saw something I should not have seen.

"I, I saw it."

"Yeah, what? Desert turtles mating and giving birth? If you see something like that during puberty then you'd toss and turn in your sleep, huh?"

No. It wasn't some secret of the wild like that. What I saw was something that would be a jump scare in a TV show about ghosts: a clear image of an occult girl.

A girl with a white face, white clothes, and white hair was standing all alone in the still-gloomy early morning hours. On top of that, there was bright red blood flowing from her forehead and she was giving me a resentful stare I could see even through the lens.

"Whoah, there must have been an accident or something! What do we do? What do we do if we end up cursed for the rest of our lives? Please go and pass on peacefully into your next life!" (1)

"Shibuya, this isn't a Buddhist country."

For someone who moved the planchette on the Ouija board all on their own, I'm someone who is incredibly weak against ghosts. Just the other day I went through a horrible experience at the summer training camp for my grass-lot baseball team when I heard rumors that a ghost comes out at the lodging house we were staying at. A stain on the wall looked like the face on BOSS coffee cans and red, metallic-smelling water came out of the faucets... and there was no water in the toilet.

"Oh, it looks like she's still there."

"What!? You can see her too, Murata!?"

"Anyone can see her. And anyway, that girl isn't a ghost."

Josak drew the reins taut and the sheep carriage gradually slowed down. The girl from before was standing silently at the spot where the carriage came to a complete stop. She had near-white, cream colored hair and large, pale blue eyes. She was white from head to toe and only the color of the blood was prominent. It was a general appearance that I had seen before.

"It's true... she's not a ghost."

She was wearing an inappropriately thin outfit for this cold weather. When I lifted a lantern from my navigator seat, I saw her thin legs and bare knees. There

was even a grey shadow on the piled up, powdery snow on the ground. Judging from her face and the length of her legs and arms, she's probably around a kindergartner. Even though it's the early morning, why exactly is a young girl like her outdoors in the dark?

"Hey you, why are you out here in the dark? Where's your home? Are your parents around?"

I jump out of the military tank and try to get a background check. The girl had thrust her fingers into the wool of a nearby sheep and was lovingly petting its warm skin. The injury and blood on her forehead had dried out quite a bit and was not as serious of an injury as I thought it was. I wonder if I can do something with the healing magic that Gisela (kind of) taught me.

"How'd you get that? Let me see. It's okay, I won't hurt you."

"... me," the little girl grabbed my sleeve with dust and soot covered fingers. "Help me, mister."

"Eh?"

This isn't the time to get depressed over being called 'mister'. We can't just leave this young girl here and we also have to treat her injury. Above all, these girl's parents must be worried right now.

"I wonder if you just wandered out here. Hey, where's your house? Where did you come from?"

The little girl pointed out where she came from silently. Murata, having jumped out of the cargo hold, snatched the telescope away from me.

"... There's smoke."

"So that means she's a lost child at the scene of a fire. We need to go wait by the scene and meet up with your parents."

There was grey smoke rising into the snowy sky in the direction that the girl pointed in. It is strange that there is a house out here in the wilderness, but for now I need to bring her back there. I set the sobbing girl on my lap and we drive the sheep on.

What was burning wasn't a house but a two-storied building with a tapered

roof. There were a dozen soldiers surrounding it, but unfortunately this is a dry wasteland with little water. They seem to be having a hard time putting out the fire. The flames are only getting stronger and there is absolutely no sign of them going out.

What has me concerned is that I don't see anyone that seems like they could be her parents, grandparents or some sort of guardian. There are around thirty children gathered together in the corner of the fence surrounding the area. They are all frightened and huddled together, but not a single one of them cried out. They are simply gazing at the sooty smoke and the triangle roof with tears flowing steadily out of their eyes. In the driver's seat, Josak mumbled to himself.

"... No way."

I didn't have time to ask him what he was about to say. The girl in my lap had attempted to run to her companions. All of the children hold out their hands in unison.

"Chucky!"

Child's Play

!? Let's put that aside for a moment because I'm

really

surprised that I recognize some of the children. The two girls holding the youngest children protectively are the beautiful twin sisters that were with Maxine.

"Oh I see! I thought they looked familiar. All of the children look just like The Splatter Sisters... Wait, that means that they're all..."

"Children of shinzoku.

He

probably knows."

There's something unpleasant in Murata's tone. After getting the sheep to a safe place, Josak comes back to us in a rush.

"I know it

very

well. This place, I mean. I was in a church like this in the past as well."

The girl named Chucky jumped into Freddy's arms. Freddy briefly yells 'why!?' She is speaking in single words and short phrases even now so it sounds like she's angry. Freddy probably wanted to say this: 'Why didn't you escape?'

Josak's eyes were far away and vacant as he watched the soldiers extinguishing the fire.

"They're probably raising children of shinzoku here in isolation. Just like what they did to us children with demon and human blood. But the situation is a bit different with these children. If they are children of shinzoku, then there are some among them who were born with strong exorcist powers. There are definitely some among them who will become excellent exorcists. In other words," a small explosion occurs inside the building and a part of the roof collapses. "They are extremely valuable... commodities."

"Commodities?"

"They can become soldiers for their own country or they can be sold off to foreign countries as exorcists. Children in this situation aren't rare on this continent. Especially those with shinzoku blood... In that respect, the demons had it easy, yeah? Most of us didn't have even the tiniest fragment of magical power."

Josak added that last part in a deliberately light tone, probably because I had fallen silent and he was taking my mood into consideration.

Children are treated as 'commodities'. Right now, I'm in a country where that's perfectly normal.

A Shimaron soldier frantically carrying water yells behind him that a staff member is inside. The precious children had escaped, but it seems that the humans working at the facility haven't made it out yet. I know that they don't have enough water, but even so, their firefighting skills are lacking. Even though there is nothing left to fuel them, the flames in the completely burned out and collapsed areas still have not gone out.

"That's weird. The left side of the roof is completely charred to carbon. How long is it going to burn?"

"Ah that's right. Shibuya, this is your first time, huh?" Murata crosses his arms over his chest with his eyebrows furrowed together. Ordinary old me can't imagine what sort of memory from the past he's reliving inside his head right now. "This particular flame can't be easily extinguished with water."

This isn't my first time. I've heard a description like that before.

"Hey Wolf, something like this happened before, right? Flames cast by a skilled person that couldn't be put out with normal water."

"Yeah. When that village of foreign humans was attacked."

My friend from Earth makes a surprised face. It's not like I told him everything that happened in The Great Demon Kingdom. Murata doesn't know how much EXP I've accumulated so he shouldn't know what level I am right now.

"Which means that it's likely that a wizard used sorcery to set this inextinguishable blaze!?"

Wolfram gives an exaggerated sigh.

"First of all, it's not 'wizard' it's practitioner. Second, it's not 'sorcery' it's magic. Third, are there any demons around besides us?"

"No."

"Which would mean that I, as a flame practitioner, am the one manipulating this fire? Are you serious? Knock it off, Yuuri. Use your head a bit. If you keep on not thinking about anything just because you've got The Great Sage by your side, your brain is going to atrophy itself into a spongy mess."

That's an affliction from modern Earth.

"This is obviously a flame from human exorcism. There is a genuine exorcist nearby who is burning this facility with all their might. They're most definitely chanting a mantra at this very moment so that everything burns to the ground."

Like he said, I tried using my brain. Because I've only focused on developing my muscles, my brain works slower than everyone else's. If it's like he said, then we just need to catch that exorcist and shut his mouth, right?

Look for someone, someone not just carrying water, the exorcist manipulating these flames. Otherwise, this fire won't go out for a long time. Eventually, it will spread beyond the building and burn the entire area.

Like I was in slow motion, I slowly begin to scan the area for a person with strong exorcist powers. I wasn't using a theory or any reasoning. It was simply me feeling out a person who can use a strange, hard to describe power as someone who had a similar power. I'm not sure if that's possible. However, I should at least be able to find a hint as to who it is.

My eyes meet the resilient gaze of one of the twins. Glitteringly bright golden eyes and jet black eyes like a starless night. The magic stone at my chest heats up. It's those eyes. They are the only ones who have them.

Aw man, please let my conclusion be wrong. However, incredibly short prayers are never answered. My guess was spot on. She was commanding a great power with her faintly moving lips. Even now that I've spotted her, she is making no attempt to stop burning the building.

"Freddy!"

To be honest, I have no idea which is which. However, seeing that she reacted when I called that name, she's probably Freddy.

"Stop this, what's the point of this!? Stop the spell right now and command your flames to be put out by that water!"

She shakes her head, sending her near-white hair swaying around her head. A refusal.

"Think about it, Freddy. What do you want? Right now you've come to a foreign country for the first time to participate in a tournament and are burning down a facility like the ones in your own country and trying to kill the people that work here. Where's the point in that!?"

"Not to you."

It has nothing to do with you.

Nothing to do with me? Murata turned his head to the side to see her defiant, golden eyes.

"... It's that kid..?"

"That's right. Hey Wolf, how did I stop the fire back then that was about to burn that village down?"

Lord von Bielefelt makes a funny face after being suddenly asked this nostalgic question.

"You don't remember? Rain."

"Rain?"

"That's right. You made a record-setting downpour occur and quickly put out the fire. Wait, you, you're not thinking of putting out that exorcist fire are you? These are entirely different circumstances than last time."

Murata continued Wolfram's words in a cool voice.

"Those children are shinzoku and this isn't demon land but human lands steeped in the elements that obey exorcists. Even if you manage to use magic in this land, it's unlikely that you will be able to go up against those children. On top of that, if you lose control and it goes on a rampage, the one who suffers that damage will be you. I don't want to put you in danger using a plan with a low likelihood of success."

"A low likelihood of success?"

If we're measuring it like that, I'm always at the lowest line. I let out a meaningless laugh and I'm filled with baseless confidence. The magic stone at my chest got even hotter so I clutched at it from above my clothes. Even that seemed to add to my strength.

The white snow that had started to accumulate on my ears, neck, and cheeks was strangely comforting. It felt like it was soaking through my skin down to the center of my body and neutralizing all the poison within it. I feel like I can do something now. I feel like I can control what usually ends up being an explosion.

"There aren't any idiots who won't try swinging their bat if the likelihood of hitting the ball is low. If you don't swing, you definitely won't hit it. Even if you get lucky and get to walk, if you don't put pressure on the opponent's pitcher you won't get any balls. Rather than watching as three strikes pass me by, I'd

take wholehearted swings at empty air. I don't care if I get called an electric fan. I'd rather take a bold swing than watch a great ball go by and regret it as I sit on the bench... maybe I'll get to first base due to a pitcher's error."

A familiar man jumped into view at the edges of my field of vision. It was Maxine with his soldier-like posture and gallant walk. He's always where I don't want him to be. I suddenly feel like cursing.

"Why is that guy here?"

"He might have stopped his carriage and made camp around here. If Jason and Freddy are here, it means that the two of them snuck out without him noticing."

Cropped Pony seemed to understand everything immediately and made his way towards the twins. I also run forward in a panic.

"Stop it, Maxine! Don't touch them!"

"Shut up!" He only lifts a hand in my direction and keeps his gaze on the twins. "Did you forget your debt to me for buying you out of this place and run away in the middle of the games!?"

Buying them out...? So Jason and Freddy are originally from here.

Maxine grabs Freddy's clothes and pushes her down to the snowy ground.

"Stop!"

The adults are blown away at the same time as the shout. The other twin's golden eyes are ablaze as they lock on to a new enemy. Jason's power protected her sister.

"He promised that he would give this place to us if we won," the girl yelled at me as her uncontrollable tears rolled down her face. "He said that if we won we'd be granted any wish! But when we came past here today... buyers had already been found for Amy and Dana and Heather and Andy."

"Freddy."

"He promised us!"

I claw at the ground unable to get close to Freddy. I can't even touch her to help her sit up and calm her down. Murata grabs my shoulder.

Nigel Wise Maxine unsheathes the sword at his waist.

"Stop, Maxine! They're children!"

I shake off the fingers holding me back. 'I'm against this,' come words not in a voice. It's okay, I have to be able to control it by myself eventually.

I'm the only one that can move myself. The one who can give orders to Yuuri Shibuya isn't Murata or

that person.

It's me.

Anticipating that my surroundings would become pure white, I close my eyes to protect against the brightness. I struggle to keep my feet on the ground like I was standing at the center of a blizzard. I can't hear that woman's voice anymore. No one has been guiding me for a long time.

If I stretch out my hand, there's no one to depend on. I can't even feel the warmth of anyone standing by my side. It's an uneasiness like walking through white darkness while holding my breath. In a spot much farther than before, Freddy stands alone in the distance. She's being hit with a wind that seems strong enough to knock her over, but strangely there is no sound.

This is strange. It's different than usual. 'The Man' with the strange way of talking isn't appearing. There's no enthusiastic BGM playing in my ear and I don't feel as if I'm holding a fan in my right hand.

It's just the girl and I facing each other in the pure white darkness.

Is this what it is to control myself? Self-discipline?

"Listen to me, Freddy. I know how you feel... no, I've never went through anything like that, but it's awful when someone breaks a promise."

Contrary to my uncharacteristically rational words, my thoughts were running wild. This is me!? This is me in that Rampage Mode!?

"But violence doesn't solve anything. Hear me out, Freddy; I want you to be brave. I don't want to defeat you. I want to save you all somehow."

"Lies." The little girl gave a small shake of her head. Her anger isn't as strong as

before. "... I don't believe you."

"I want to put out the fire, Freddy. There are people in there. They're people you know, right? You might have talked and played with them. They might have made your food. Is taking their lives really what you want to do? I promise, Freddy. If you put the fire out, I'll take all of you away from here. I'll take you to a much better place. Isn't what you and Jason wished for a more fun place to live? I'll take you so come. We'll definitely find it."

I slowly stretch out my sixteen year old hand.

I don't know how much I can do. But, I'll do it. As far as I can go. After an irritatingly long time, Freddy grabbed my fingers.

"I'll definitely find a place for you. I promise. I won't leave you halfway."

Upon seeing the giant dragon that materialized out of thin air, Murata silently closed his eyes.

He is slowly understanding why he was born for this king's reign, for this Demon King's era, as Yuuri Shibuya's friend.

The snow turns into a torrential downpour and the flames go out instantly.

However, he was still wary of the shinzoku. They are only troublesome beings for demons.

If things go bad, they can be angels of death.

While using this terrifying amount of magic, his friend is only kneeling exhausted in front of him. Where did that energetic, intimidating, and charismatic image from last time go to? Yuuri himself seems to have noticed the unusual change as well and is attempting to hide his unease with frivolous banter. However, there is no energy in his voice.

"... You know, it's like there's something weird with me. I seem to have turned into a cool guy."

"To me it just looks like you pulled yourself together a tiny bit."

There's even a bit of unease in Wolfram's teasing.

Ken Murata looked up at the lightening sky and tried to find a sign of a good

omen. However, before he could even see its color, the grey smoke obstructed the gaze of his dark eyes.

(1) Yuuri used a Japanese, Buddhist term here for 'pass on peacefully into your next life' which is 'joubutsu' (

SO

much easier to say in Japanese XD). Anyway, it is a word specific to Buddhism so that is why Murata comments on that in the next line.

OKAY! SO! This was the last chapter I was going to do for this novel! Now I'm going to finish KakkaMa and all the little KKM side stories I've gotten from Clavelsangrante before I revisit the main story. If Irenne still hasn't started 8 by then, I'll work on that. Otherwise, I'll move on to Ojousama, also known as the novel with that Conrad-looking Nazi on the cover XD

Anyway, you can find the last three chapters of this novel on

Baka-Tsuki

translated by Vivarina from the Chinese version. I skimmed through it to see if there were any names that might be significantly different in the Chinese version (as in, more than a letter or so off). I haven't read past this novel so I don't know if these names will be used again, so I figured I'd make a mini list just in case for any future translations (and also to not confuse anyone just in case a name that pops up in the chapters I did also pops up in hers as something different).

Donierson = East Nilzon (I mentioned this change in an earlier chapter ^-^)

Saismoya = Sizemore (This one too~)

Lambel = Lambert (although I could actually change mine to Lambel as this is also a viable transcription of the Japanese name and there doesn't seem to be an official one floating around. I kind of like Lambert though XD)

Artellino = Arnold

Colonel Kelujin = Captain Crusoe

Hewbert = Chevalier

'the plumber Clansian' = Qracian Waterworks (this one was just a joke/pun about an actual company)

Oh, and she also uses the Japanese for Big and Small Shimaron (Dai/Shou). I have a feeling everyone already knows which is which already, but I figured I'd list that anyway, just in case~

Here's a small list of names she couldn't translate in Chapter 10. If you're not familiar with Kanji or Hanzi, this might be really confusing, but I list them in order:

太宰治 is Osamu Dazai

立春 is Risshun

福冈巨蛋 is The Fukuoka Dome

小次郎 is (Sasaki) Kojirou (famous Japanese swordmaster who is most famous for getting killed by this guy v)

宫本武藏 is Miyamoto Musashi (super-duper-uber-ultra famous Japanese swordsman and Rounin warrior who killed the guy above^ That's right. He's so famous, getting killed by him makes you famous.)

水户黄门 is Mito Koumon (he's been explained in numerous novels in the past)

小林幸子 is Sachiko Kobayashi (an Enka singer famous for her gaudy costumes)

美川宪一 is Kenichi Mikawa (another Enka singer and drag queen who is also famous for his gaudy costumes)

Anyway, I didn't check it for differences besides names like I did with the German translations because it seems like the Chinese version is fairly faithful. They even keep some of the Japanese pop culture jokes. Although, I did notice that she translated 20,000 as two million in chapter 10 and then again with 50,000 <-> 5 million (Japanese and Chinese have a separate word for 10,000 so 20,000 is actually written as two ten thousands, 200,000 is twenty ten thousands *etc.* So 20,000<->2 million is an easy mistake to make~).

See you in the continuation of KakkaMa!

Tags: kkm translation, novel 7

Current Location: <u>Home!</u>

Current Mood: relieved

Current Music: Let's Get It Started

MaruMA:Volume07:Chapter10

Chapter 10

After the Shou Shimaron team competing against us was no longer in sight, the sheep started to increase their speed.

"There's someone coming?! Are they catching up with us?!"

Murata, sprawled on the loading rack, was shouting, "I can only see a blur of red! And it's very probable that they're going to catch up. Eh? Those aren't horses...woah.....my god! It's a man-powered carriage! A man-powered carriage!"

"Musclemen?!"

Muscles, musclemen, the team of musclemen, that's the Nagoya style of training muscles. Twelve very developed musclemen were pushing forward amidst the snow. I could see steam rising from their flushed half-naked bodies. However, the sight of their grim and determined expressions would make people want to avoid them.

"They're so barbaric, why aren't they wearing any shoes?" (Wolfram)

"Your focus is wrong, Wolf, the main problem we have now isn't that, now the main problem isn't that at all."

The musclemen carriage had sleighs attached to the bottom, so they would be able to travel faster on a wet muddy road covered with traces of rapidly melting snow. If our speed were to reduce by even a fraction, it was highly possible they could catch up with us."

"We're rounding a bend! Young sirs! Hold on tight! If you get shaken off, this carriage won't be assuming any responsibility for that!" (Jozak)

"Hold on tight then.... Woah, I bit my tongue!"

We made a 90 degree turn around that last bend at such a super high speed

that the back portion of our carriage almost disintegrated. I never thought that I would get the chance to experience a tossing motion on board a tank pulled by livestock. The huge arena was visible a few hundred meters ahead; the bright brown walls made it look like a baseball stadium from afar.

Based on the excited expressions on the civilians along the roadside, we weren't far from the finish line. However, just like when we had first landed on Donierson, they had their pinkies up while shouting. Children who were restrained by their mothers to prevent them from running onto the road were waving yellow flags with all their might.

"This is so exhilarating ~ the atmosphere reminds me of the welcome reception for marathon runners."

"Yuuri, don't tell me you think they're here to welcome and encourage us....
That's impossible. No matter how wimpy or naïve you are, you should have some limitation to your self-importance."

"Huh?"

Just when Wolf was calmly telling me this, a white spherical object brushed past my cheek and smashed against the hood of the carriage. Sticky light yellow semi-transparent liquid flowed out.

It was a rotten egg.

"This can't be, why are we so hated? I thought even opponents in this competition should have a crowd to cheer them on?"

"Don't forget, this isn't Shin Makoku, it's Shimaron, and this is the capital Lambel! All these people want is to see Dai and Shou Shimaron against each other in the finals, they don't care about the other contestants." (Wolfram)

"You can say that this makes it more complicated." (Murata)

Murata was fanning his right hand in front of his nose because of the pungent stink of the rotten egg.

"They probably don't want competitors from another place to win, that's why they attacked all the competitors with abusive language and petty actions.

Shibuya, this is the hosting country after all, just like in baseball, we're the guest

team."

"....even if their opponents are guests, they should just sit back and watch their performance on the battlefield, as practiced by the Pacific Democratic Union, this should be common knowledge everywhere?" (Yuuri)

"I can't think of anything else to say, Shibuya, you're too full of sportsmanship."

"If even athletes don't have the spirit of sportsmanship, what difference do we have from beasts?"

"The Beast is actually quite cute...! Don't you often see him on entertainment programs?" (The Beast here refers to wrestler Bob Sharp in Japan)(Murata speaking)

"I say young sirs, are you done with your discussion?! Do you want to win or not?" (Jozak)

"Of course!"

This was the reason we had come this far. After Jozak had made an 'ok' gesture with his hand, he swung the whip towards the side of the driver's seat. T-Zou reacted quickly to this and cried out sharply to his team-mates.

The sound he made reminded me of my mother.

Run! Sheep, sheep, run along! This sounded a bit like 太宰治 (太宰治 is an author who wrote the book 'Run, Milos!')

When we reached the final stretch of the racecourse, we saw the massive stone walls of the city ahead. There was an oval-arched entrance in the middle of the whole stretch of brown wall. In our process of getting there, the stuff the people threw at us was really rather rich in variety, other than eggs and fruit, we also had to duck to avoid strawberries and over-ripe tomatoes.

"Ah ~ now I remember, the Tomato Festival! The owner of my soul five past lives ago had been a Spanish baker...!" (Murata)

"Grandpa Murata, please don't talk about your past at a time like this..."

T-Zou and the rest of Mary's Little Lambs were charging at full speed towards the entrance to the city. Suddenly, the snow on the ground had vanished and

the sleigh made a harsh grinding noise against the stony ground (within the city). The sheep had rushed straight onto the dark streets in the city due to their acceleration and were now performing some emergency braking. When the braking was finally starting to have an effect, the people's angry cries were out of audible range.

Heavy barriers had been released down over the entrance and the gates firmly locked. The musclemen team directly behind us crashed into the gates head on with a dull thump.

"Good job, musclemen! But that looked pretty painful." (Yuuri)

"This isn't the time to pity others! They (Dai Shimaron) won't be giving us much time (to prepare for the next stage)."

"Huh? But we've reached the destination in first place...."

Looking around suddenly, I realized that 'Light As A Dream' was now surrounded by more than ten soldiers from Dai Shimaron. Although the weather was freezing cold, every single one of them still managed to keep their hair light and floating. They were reluctantly informing us of our placing in the race.

"You've won the 'speed' event, and thus have qualified for the finals. Get down from the carriage and stand erect, every one of you!"

"We'd have got down without you ordering us around so loudly. Pfft, what kind of judges are these! So rough! Is this the way to behave to the winning team? I might report this to the International Judicial Committee!" (Yuuri)

"Forget it, maybe they're just local volunteers." (Murata)

Once we had gone under the shelter of the roof and were no longer under the snow, my nausea returned. This felt like the early symptoms of a cold, if I don't get some hot herbal soup later, I'll be plagued by a fever tonight. It's strange that the colder the weather gets, the better I feel. Had I been a polar bear or a penguin in my previous life?

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"....anyway, I...I feel like I'm 'sheepsick' right now..." (Yuuri)
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"What...what're you talking about?

The....finals.....are.....being....held....right....now!" (Wolfram)

Wolfram looked rather dizzy and shaken himself as he stood up, it seems like he himself wasn't in good condition.

"Huh? Don't we get any time to rest? But we just arrived? This isn't a triathlon. The hosts needed only to wait for us at the arena later. We've eaten and slept out in the wilderness for the past few days, we're exhausted now."

"And that's why they're doing this."

Jozak, who was the first to leap down from the driver's seat, extended his right hand to me. Do I look as bad as I feel?

"They're going to do their best to stop us from winning. If there's any chance at all, they'll force us into a disadvantageous situation and completely defeat us. After all, if the winners are from a colony of theirs, the hosts won't know what requests or wishes we might make." (Wolfram)

We had only one wish.

Give back the box! Return the box to us!

I think that Dai Shimaron won't be expecting representatives from Caloria to make such a request.

"Move faster! We've already announced to the audience that the team that excelled in the 'speed' and 'intelligence' events has arrived. If you waste time like this, the two million people in the audience might go on strike.....no, you can't make His Majesty wait either."

A man who looked like the group leader within that group of yellow and brown uniforms was shouting out orders loudly. The 'His Majesty' he had mentioned was of course not me, but was the great figure in this country instead. Murata was frowning slightly, while I could hear the soldiers making snorting sounds with their noses.

However, if the arena really is packed with more than two million people, then the atmosphere there would be more hectic than the baseball stadium on a nonholiday. Can we battle calmly under the scrutiny of all these people?

I massaged my aching limbs as we were hurried along a windowless corridor. This was the so-called backstage, a room that resembled a temporary resting

room for participants. I was summoned to approach some youths lined up in three rows, I could feel Jozak's watchful eyes from behind. This reminded me of safety precautions, Saismoya and the others should arrive soon. Although they were progressing along with us, they had followed a completely different route, plus the fact that we couldn't predict their time of arrival, hence there was only one guardian (Jozak) currently amongst us, and Jozak's burden had thus been increased.

The closer we got to the entrance designed especially for the participants, the louder and wilder the atmosphere in the arena seemed. The area above our heads probably also consisted seats for the audience, and an earth-shattering vibration seemed to be traveling along the ceiling (of the space we were in), the people were probably stamping on the floor in impatience since we had yet to appear. The rhythmic vibrations were affecting the walls, I could feel a numbing sensation under my feet.

The storage space (we were led to) resembled an open area typical found in baseball stadiums, there were no doors or partitions here. There was a whole array of dangerous objects on the long table in the middle of the room.

"On no, we should change quickly....although I'm not that confident of my abs at this moment, there's no more time to brood over such matters anymore."

Strangely, the Shimaron soldiers started to panic when they saw me loosening my buttons without ay hesitation.

"Wait a minute, participant! What're you doing?!"

"Huh? The audience and judges are all men anyway! It's no use protesting even if I'm embarrassed or hesitant, isn't it? Since the rules stated that we males have to compete naked...."

"What're you talking about?! This is a competition to be held in front of His Majesty?!"

"Shibuya, this isn't the ancient Olympics." (Murata)

"This is just like you, this is exactly why I constantly nag at you for not being vigilant enough about matters." (Wolfram)

Murata had lowered his eyebrows in shock, while Wolfram was angrily

refastening all my buttons.

"Listen to me carefully, Mazoku nobles aren't allowed to reveal themselves in public, even if you want to strip it'll have to be for an emergency situation!"

"Emergency? What...what did you mean by that? Anyway, sexual harassment can't possibly occur between members of the same gender. Since I can't strip, then let me don a uniform or a baseball jacket."

As we were representing a colony, we'd have to march into the stadium with dignity. If we had all that heavy winter clothing on, all those fans wouldn't take a second glimpse at us. I just wasn't sure whether the Calorian cheerleading team would be there to spur us on.

"Just keep the clothing on yourselves! No need for extra measures, just select your weapons quickly!"

The Shimaron soldiers doubling as workers in this competition were pointing towards that massive pile of murder weapons at the middle of the room. Under the bright illumination of the fire torches, every single weapon was glinting with a dull copper glow.

"How can we use weapons from the opposing country? I have my own sword."

"That won't do, these are contest rules..."

"Hey, hey, hey, don't tell me you ..."

The man who probably had the most potential in this competition was wielding an axe in his hands while speaking in a cold tone. (Yuuri means Jozak)

"You'd have the nerve to give us low quality weapons so that we'd lose the battle within a few seconds, wouldn't you?" (Jozak)

The soldiers' expressions changed as they said, "All of you low-down colonized people, watch your language and behavior! These are all weapons that His Majesty kindly prepared for all of you low-down people, since you don't have any proper weapons! Every single one of them is a high quality creation made by famous blacksmiths in our kingdom...."

"They probably aren't that high class, anyway the quality is really rather poor." (Jozak)

Jozak had cut in on their talk. He was swinging his long and heavy steel axe above his head over and over again, so the soldiers in close proximity to him were forced to back off.

Although Murata wasn't one of the competitors, he was inspecting the weapons one by one.

"Since this was decided by the committee, then there's nothing we can do about it. If we lose our qualifications for this competition by raising a meaningless objection here, then that really would be a double loss. Seeing that all the weapons here are sorted according to size and type, it wouldn't be that bad to select weapons from amongst them. What weapon would you choose, Shibuya? It's a pity there aren't any guns here, else this would be an opportunity for me to teach you the 'Gun^[1]'..!"

"Is that....a new weapon?"

I'd never properly held a real weapon before this; moreover I wasn't the fighting type, so I hadn't had the opportunity to practice with my fists and my knees.

In that battle with Wolfram before, it was Conrad who had selected a light and convenient weapon for me. After that, the 'weapons' I had held had either been a walking stick which could produce flowers or a Mazoku sword that would change according to the mood of the person wielding it. Anyway, I don't seem to have any relationship with a proper weapon.

On the contrary, it was the third son who had dealt with weapons for more than two million and four thousand days who felt my arm then said, "Your arm muscles are in pretty good shape. Why don't you select the bow and arrow, didn't you mention before that you were good at locking in on someone who's running then zooming in for the kill?"

"Ah, that's rather different from assassinating someone who's running! Anyway what I had meant wasn't really attacking the runner with a real weapon, (I meant) I was throwing the baseball accurately to prevent the other team from scoring, that's (what I meant by) zooming in for the kill!"

The soldiers who were listening to our conversation were calling out nervously,

"Arrows and bows are prohibited from the arena!" That really is rather wise; after all if a battling competition like this allowed the use of missiles, there would be an opportunity for villains to assassinate the king. "Then what about the spear? Try to hold it."

I accepted the dull-hued metallic weapon. This was a weight I couldn't hold with just one hand, hence I placed the end of the long weapon on my right shoulder. However, my three companions all sighed in unison, "You look like a farmer holding a plough while working in the fields...."

I obey the law prohibiting the use of guns, bombs, bullets, chemicals and blades, so no matter how many weapons they prepare, there would never be a weapon suitable for me. If I'd known such a day would come, I wouldn't have worked so hard at playing baseball, but entered the kendo or archery societies. If that hadn't had any effect, I'd have entered the air rifle society or the stick-fighting society, oh right, there's also the woodwork society...and the chain and saber society seemed quite interesting as well.... I went over the neatly arrayed row of weapons one by one to try holding them, but then Wolfram drew out his narrow sword and said, "Any weapon about this length would do for him. Anyway Yuuri doesn't really need to go out and fight in the arena, he's just here to fulfill the head count."

"Ah, really?"

"Of course, even the Kohi holding a sword would have more chance at winning than you have, and also we can't possibly let you face danger like this! Anyway we can win just by winning in two rounds, so leave it to me to get these two victories!"

Jozak, standing behind him, was mouthing silently, "Despite your childish face, your words are really rather good at stimulating people...!" I just wished that this prince could share some of his confidence with me.

"Huh?"

I had found a hilt that felt familiar to me, and I couldn't stop myself from cheering out loud.

"What about this? This'll probably do! Hey, madam, listen to me! This feels almost exactly like a metallic baseball bat!"

Of course it weighed more than a wooden or even limited edition baseball bat, but the familiar texture and ice-cold feel of it was an irresistible temptation to me.

"Heika...that.....are you really fine with it?"

However, Wolfram and Jozak had objections against its appearance.

"Although we've to keep it a secret, you're still the Maou! A figure with such a high status wielding a stick as a weapon, that's not on par with your identity! And how can you live up to the reputation of all the past Maous?"

Rather than call it a stick, let's say it's more a metallic stick, and there were even protruding objects on its surface. This weapon would appear with the ghosts and demons every 立春 festival. However, no matter if I grabbed it with both hands or stood in an open stance (a stance in baseball) and tried swinging it, my movements felt so smooth and natural. Also, after several trial swings, it didn't slide out of my hands.

(This weapon resembles the one used by the Japanese every 立春 festival, where it represents the ghost, and people would scatter beans on it to represent exorcism).

"Mm, this feels quite okay." (Yuuri)

Contrary to the other two who had gloomy expressions on their faces, Murata who was covering his mouth with his hand and laughing seemed pretty happy. "What does it matter? Anyway, there've been heroes who defeated their sworn enemies using oars, so a miracle might occur here?" (Murata)

"Miracle, please appear! If there isn't a miracle, I really don't have any confidence at winning!" (Yuuri)

We arrived at the entrance to the arena after being hurried along by the harried-looking soldiers. We stepped onto the smooth stone slabs and faced the heavy doors before they opened. When I reached out and pushed the ice-cold iron doors open, the loud resonating cheers cascaded down on me like an avalanche.

"Woah!"

I hurriedly blocked the door with my back.

"What is it, Yuuri?" (Wolfram)

"Five...five million!"

Oh no, this isn't even close to a large-scale baseball game. Based on the number of audience, their enthusiasm and their animosity towards the opponents, this was more like the grand finals held in 福冈巨蛋. Also, the seats were taken up by dirty men, and their booing cries were really rather scary.

"...let's go back to the resting room and hold another pre-battle meeting." (Yuuri)

"What're you talking about? There's no more time for us to be scared." (Wolfram)

"Relax, Shibuya! Just try to think of the audience as potatoes." (Murata)

"But potatoes don't make noises!" (Yuuri)

"Then think of them as scarlet-eared poison bunnies, their calls are really quite loud."

The mental image of a pink rabbit shaking its behind appeared in my mind.

The two Mazoku grabbed me from both sides and led me to the door. Murata quickly pulled the door open.

Loud and earth-shattering shouts and countless orange-ish light greeted us. Everywhere I looked, I could see torches that lit up the arena so that it seemed as bright as day. Only now did I discover that it was already evening.

Just when I was about to step into the resting area that was connected to the entrance, I felt the sensation of being the subject of heated glares and also a rush of cold air. This was we were standing at a spot resembling that of the resting area for a team in a baseball stadium. Logically the audience wouldn't be able to see into that area, but at this moment the audience's gaze was able to penetrate straight into the enemy camp, this was pretty strange.

"Shibuya, your mask."

I quickly pulled off the goggles and with my woolen hat still on, I put on the

shiny silvery mask. This had to be done because there must be at least one person in this trio to represent the colony (of Caloria). That's right, I'm here right now not as Shibuya Yuuri, but rather as the leader of Caloria – Norman Gilbert.

"I was about to comment on why it's so cold here, turns out that the architecture here isn't really like that of a baseball stadium." (Yuuri) There was no roof over the arena, so I could see white particles drifting down from the dark sky which couldn't be illuminated by the torches. But to be honest, a roof wouldn't have been compatible with this arena.

All the passion from the audience couldn't melt the snow, the arena was piled high with white snow.

I raised my head and looked up at the darkened sky.

The number of stars in the sky seemed to have increased.

"That's so strange ~"

"Huh?"

"I think my flu symptoms decrease greatly whenever I come in contact with snow... logically this is impossible. Just think about it! Who on earth should feel better when they come into contact with a cold wind? Usually it would just make someone feel worse, not better."

The ache at the back of my head, the difficulty in breathing, nausea, ache in my limbs, fear of the cold and even the stuffiness in my chest had disappeared mysteriously.

"Maybe I was a polar bear in my past life, it's a pity I wasn't a mountain lion."

"That's because snow is very fair to every kingdom."

Murata placed his hand against my back as he mumbled a deep and incomprehensible response.

"The snow doesn't belong to any element, and they're drifting down from the clouds in the sky that were originally looming over another land and not this place, so no matter where the snow falls it will always be neutral."

"....what ...what did you mean? What's that supposed to mean?"

"Forget it, I think you're a 'dog-type^[2]' person, right?"

Do you mean that I'm the type that would rather run about happily in the courtyard, but would choose not to cuddle up in front of the warm fire? The arena was built in an oval shape rather like a stadium, and was encircled by high-rising seats for the audience; and to the north was a building of a similar color scheme with the stadium. It was rather too luxurious to be an institutional building.

"Can that be a hotel? Just like in Disneyland." (Yuuri)

"I don't know, could it be a shrine? The kind where they sacrifice the noble spirits of warriors to the gods." (Murata)

That's for dead people?! That's so unlucky!

There was a resting area for the team from the host country directly opposite us and it was at a great distance away. I couldn't make out any silhouettes in that darkened room, so I couldn't be sure about the physique of the competitors.

"Tch! They were rushing us along, but why is it that our opponents get to take their own sweet time?"

"I just hope that they aren't going to make us wait that long, or we might end up like 小次郎…" (in the battle between 宫本武藏and 小次郎, 小次郎had lost because of his impatience due to 宫本武藏being late on purpose)

If we ended up like小次郎……talking about periodic dramas, I think水户黄门 would be more suitable for the role.

The worker who had led us here raised his hand and stopped us from continuing our conversation. With a strange expression on his face, he announced, "Be quiet! His Majesty is about to make his appearance."

About 70% of the audience had already stood up and were now facing the north. A shiny box-like seat was silently being lowered down from the roof of that building. The band started to play and the whole arena seemed to resonate with the singing of a male choir. However, listening carefully, I discovered that the singing was actually coming from the audience from the north, the others were just singing a few random lines. This happens in every baseball stadium as

well.

Murata was muttering, "The real threat might not be this kingdom itself."

I was trying to listen to what he might say next, but all I could hear was that soldier muttering, "His Majesty....?"

The person in that golden seat which had been lowered was not the king, but rather someone like a prince. Maybe he was appearing in place of his busy father? Or maybe His Majesty was ill in bed, although he was the ruler of such a large kingdom, he would have his own personal troubles.

Although he was so far away I couldn't see his face clearly, just looking at the prince's clothing was a sight well —worth seeing.

"小.....小林幸子..." (Yuuri)

Or maybe 美川宪一.

I never thought I would experience a sight like this in a kingdom so far away. His Highness was decorated by white, gold and yellow feathers, he looked like a human-sized ostrich, I felt that this was actually rather vulgar.....but the luxurious decorations did manage to attract everyone's attention. That carrier box which had delivered His Highness to his seat was raised back up at a speed much greater than how it had been lowered.

"Ah ~ the basket has flown!" (Yuuri)

"That's from Simon and Garfunkel!" (that sentence is the same as the lyrics from 'El Condor Pasa" by the famous 60's group Simon and Garfunkel) (Murata speaking)

"I really don't want to ask you exactly how old you're anymore.." (Yuuri) This decision of mine was really rather smart.

When the (singing) ceremony had ended, our opponents finally made their move. Compared to our resting area which was very brightly illuminated by fire torches, the opponents' resting area was shrouded in darkness. Although I couldn't make out their appearances and gender, I could distinguish their heights.

All three of them were about the same height, with broad shoulders, long legs

and the ideal physical build for an athlete.

"Uh, darn it...! Why are all three of them so manly?" (Yuuri)

"Why are you looking ready to cry over this?"

"If we're judged by appearance, we'll definitely win. If we don't include Jozak." (Yuuri)

"Ah I'm so sorry, Heika. If we're competing to produce breast milk, I'll definitely not lose"

"My god...! Why do I feel that we're now the perverted trio..?" (Yuuri)

I was now completely engulfed by my low self esteem; I had already lost psychologically before the competition had even started. Two men who looked like they were judges trudged through the snow to the center of the stadium. Both of them had beautiful brown hair, these were typical soldiers from Shimaron. They gave us the 'thumbs-up' sign, probably this meant that the first round in the competition was about to start. "Oh, right, we've yet to determine the order of appearance in the arena, who wants to go first? I think we should let the weakest person go first, just to tire our opponents."

"You're the last one." (Wolfram)

"Heika is the last one." (Jozak)

Although the words they had used were slightly different, they meant the exact same thing. Murata, however, raised a very unique example.

"Shibuya, don't you usually read sports manga? In judo or kendo, they usually send out their weaker juniors first, they'll only send their main champ up at the very last moment. As long as the juniors defeat their opponents quickly, there won't be any need for the main champs from the opposing teams to face each other."

"When have I become the weakest competitor...." (Yuuri)

"That's actually a well-established fact."

Once something becomes public knowledge, even if the person in question has a high status, they (the Mazoku) won't be discreet about that fact in the least. Hence to the Mazoku, this type of behavior to their king was not in the least

strange.

"If you want to know how good they really are, then I should go first..." (Yuuri)

"I'm going." (Wolfram)

Nobody dared object to Wolfram's firm statement.

"If unfortunately I lose, then Gurrier should go up next, don't let Yuuri get up there."

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"....alright." (Jozak)
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Jozak was smiling and nodding in approval, they were completely ignoring my opinion. However, rather than say I was sad that they had ignored me, I was more concerned about what Wolfram had just said. If unfortunately I lose....

According to my understanding of him, it was really hard to imagine that he would actually think of losing. I might even say that he had never felt intimidated in the face of any opponent before, and could maintain his confidence to the fullest at all times. I'd even thought that I'd have to get someone to teach this proud third son the meaning of humility.

"Wolf!"

I grabbed a sword from the wall. The weapon he had chosen was heavier than it looked, and the hilt was so rough it didn't look easy to grip.

"Ah? The King himself is handing me a weapon?"

"Don't joke about it, are you fine with such a heavy weapon?"

"Heavy? I'd purposely chosen a weapon that closely resembles the weapon I carry about."

Von Bielefeld-kyo carefully accepted the weapon from me, drew out the silvery sword then unhesitatingly thrust its brown and insignificant sheath against my chest.

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"This is for Heika."
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"What...."

"Don't mind me, it's just my personal way of concentrating."

He stepped slowly up the stairs and prepared to enter the snow-piled arena. Instantly, the noisy shouts turned into cheers and the atmosphere was now even wilder than before. The opponent's representative had also appeared. Because they were too far way, I couldn't make out his appearance, but as he came up the stairs, he seemed to be chewing something in his mouth.

"Ah \sim he has his hair tied up in a ponytail! This is a sight we usually see in ramen shops." (Murata)

Murata was casually giving his opinion, but I wasn't feeling as at ease about the whole situation as he was. The man had on a yellow and brown army uniform, it seems that the first opponent we had to face was just an ordinary soldier from Shimaron. However, the unique blades he carried on both sides did make me feel very uneasy.

"Those are double blades!" (Yuuri)

Those blades were curved and of a length similar to the one our representative was using. I gripped the sheath Wolfram had handed me and pulled on his sleeve as I spoke. At this moment my voice sounded like that of someone else.

"Oh no, it's Musashi! It's Musashi! Are our opponents sponsored by the Japanese media?!"

"What are you talking about?"

"I say Wolf, it's better to let Jozak go first! Those double blades look pretty powerful to me, and you...you once....tied with me in a battle." As I was bringing up something in the past, he was frowning as he raised his head and said, "So that battle made you lose confidence in my combat skills?"

"No, I didn't mean that at all! I didn't mean that at all...."

"You really think I didn't go easy on you that time?"

"Mm!"

This was completely up to my own judgment. He was right, I was completely inexperienced in battle, and at that time I had been a rare double black. It was highly probable that he had gone easy on me to avoid injuring me and causing something he might regret later.

"Then let me tell you this." (Wolfram)

His emerald green eyes were slightly narrowed, and with a smile extremely incompatible with a bishounen, he continued, "I didn't go easy on you that time, you really did win then, and I hadn't dared to use any petty tricks that had the potential to kill. But don't worry, I won't be as kind today. Because my opponent is someone I can't find any respect for no matter how hard I try."

After he had spoken to me, with his face close to mine, Wolfram turned his back on me and went out (into the arena). The fact that he had suddenly admitted that I had won actually made me feel like I had suddenly been attacked.

"...what.....that was too sudden." (Yuuri)

"Aren't you going to put that down?" (Murata)

Murata was pointing at the sheath.

"Didn't I tell you before, von Bielefeld-kyo is not delicate in the least?"

"But his opponent has double blades?! I really can't feel at ease about the whole thing."

"Even if you have two baseball bats, you won't definitely get a good strike, right? At least trust him a bit more! And also, can't you put down that sheath?"

"....no, I'm fine with holding it."

I wasn't going to put something Wolfram had told me to hold for him on the ground, I could only watch his silhouette from behind as he left. The soldier from Shimaron who had also left his resting area reached the middle of the arena a the same time as he (Wolfram) did. Suddenly, I could feel someone looking at me, and my skin started to prickle nervously.

I felt that somewhere from the northern audience seats, a warm and not unfriendly gaze was directed at me.

"Am I being too sensitive? I keep feeling that there's someone I know here, but there can't possibly be a friend I know amongst the audience."

"Maybe it's a young and lovely girl from Shimaron who's attracted to you or von Bielefeld-kyo?"

"It would be lovely if that's the case, but didn't Flynn say that the World's Best Tournament prohibits women from entering the arena?"

"Ah, right! Then it's a cool and strong man from Shimaron?"

"That doesn't make me feel happy at all...."

Just thinking about a long-haired hunk holding a bunch of flowers reminded me of a live wrestling program.

1. Jump up ↑

Japanese pronunciation for gun=kata, Murata is referring to the movie 'Equilibrium', where they held guns with both hands resembling the kata/forms of movement in kendo

2. Jump up ↑

the Japanese group people into two large groups, 'dog-type' and 'cat-type'. 'Dog-type' people are very persistent and covet others' attention, while those who don't care about others' opinion are 'cat-type'

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Chapter 11

There was a strange party of people heading towards Shimaron.

"I'd say we look more suspicious than strange."

"Mm.... I never thought that I, who've been given nicknames such as 'The hero of the seas', 'warrior of naval wars', and even the terrible name of 'monster of the ocean' would have to perform such unimportant tasks on foreign soil. My god ~ "

"What are you talking about? Captain Saismoya, this isn't an unimportant thing, it counts as sneaking into the enemy territory! This is actually a very important assignment! In the past, I've even been the subject of the red devil's experiments! If only the Mazoku could give up their self-pride, they would be able to do anything they wanted to."

The silver-haired female at the very front of the group turned around and told Dakaskos and Saismoya, "Ssh! It's the patrol. Are you ready? We're about to take action."

Then she faced the patrolling soldiers who were looking furious.

"How are you – we're selling beverages...! We're delivering cold drinks to the audience in the VIP room...!"

They were heading towards the shrine in the city of Lambel in Dai Shimaron while carrying a box covered by a light green cloth. The final round of the World's Best Fighter Tournament was being held in the grand arena next to it, this would be the very last stage of the competition. They could hear the enthusiastic cheers of the audience even though they were inside the solid stone building.

"....this is great, they don't suspect us at all. It's probably because the size of this box is almost the same as a cooler, yeah, that's probably it." The box was about as large as a small coffin and two men would be perfectly capable of carrying it. To avoid getting busted if it was checked, we had placed real wine bottles inside it. They ranged from high-quality wines to those common wines for ordinary citizens, this was really a plan that paid no heed to expenses.

"Let's not even discuss myself or Dakaskos, even Lady Flynn is disguised as a beverage seller. I'm really sorry that the leader of Caloria has to demean herself like this."

"It's alright, the colonel told me to stay on board the ship, but I insisted on coming. Anyway I'm not the daughter of a noble family, I'm just a simple girl from the flatlands. I prefer this simple getup compared to a gown that's so long it would trip me up."

They had succeeded in sneaking into the shrine so easily because of Flynn Gilbert and her experience in training the army – she was truly the daughter of the flatlands. Most of the soldiers stationed around the city were from the flatlands. Even the soldier guarding this building was the same – a middle-aged soldier with an out of date haircut.

He had let them pass through after seeing Flynn disguised as a beverage seller, maybe he had been feeling a nostalgia for a certain dessert at that moment.

"However the Great Sage really does give us orders that are difficult to follow. Telling us to steal that box and substitute it with this counterfeit – I never expected that Jozak had been working on this counterfeit all the time we were on the boat."

Placing the box on the polished floor, Saismoya stretched himself lazily. Dakaskos removed the cloth he had bound round his head and was wiping away the sweat on his forehead.

"You're right! The Great Sage has predicted that Heika wouldn't win. Actually Heika is quite reliable, that's why I bet all my money that Caloria would win. If I win (the bet), I can claim an infinite amount of reward money, and anyway there's still Jozak amongst the three of them, it's highly probable that they will win all three rounds."

"Mm – and Gurrier is one of those that returned from Artellino, he's among the best from the Ruttenberg troop."

"That's right, maybe they won't even need Heika or His Excellency to go out there, Jozak alone would be able to beat all three competitors!"

Flynn felt rather confused after hearing so many strange names and places. She was debating whether to ask any further questions or not, she wanted confirmation of her suspicions yet she hesitated to do so. In the end she succumbed to temptation and interrupted the conversation between the two men.

"Wait a minute, before the two of you continue with your conversation, I need to tell you that I've heard a lot about Yuu...ehm, Colonel Kelujin's and Robinson's real identities. Have you two obtained their permission before talking so freely about them in front of me?"

However the look she got from them was one that was one of 'Haven't you discovered their identities before this?!' Actually she had more or less sensed the truth, but had felt that she should pretend not to know anything out of common courtesy, since the people involved hadn't actually confirmed her suspicions. And anyway.... A lock of hair worked free from the knot she had tied her hair up in and she toyed with that lock with her index finger.

These people still aren't aware of the terrible things I did in the past, they don't know that Flynn Gilbert is actually a cold and ruthless woman who doesn't care what other people think of her.

"You can't talk about national secrets in front of me! I don't want to be responsible for any consequences from your actions! I might end up selling your secrets to others."

This was because she would do anything to obtain freedom for Caloria. As long as she could get back the ocean, harbor, land, people, her husband and the world she loved so much, she wouldn't even hesitate at betraying the gods. She had been doing this all along, she couldn't suddenly stop and reform at this moment, it was too late even though she regretted all this now.

Even though she was feeling so much regret within it would be of no consequence to matters now.

"Why would you describe yourself as someone so scary, Lady Flynn? Don't let's talk about Dakaskos, but I'm just an ordinary task-performing soldier. All the

important information that would be dangerous if they were known to outsiders would never reach my ears."

"Task-performing soldier?"

"Ah, there's actually no rank in the army with that title, but I reached the status of a soldier who performs tasks only after much perseverance."

"Aren't you very close to Colonel Kelujin?"

Dakaskos was rubbing his head, unconsciously adhering to an old habit of his. Of course, there was no hair there at all. He was rubbing his bald and shiny scalp while saying, "Ah —! Does Heika call himself Colonel Kelujin now? The Colonel is actually very special, you know.he doesn't care whether you are a colonel or just an ordinary soldier, he... he can talk with simply anyone and can get along with anyone easily. He doesn't care about status or ranking, he gets along with every single one of us, and is willing to treat us all equally and even demean himself to our status. He's a very unique person, to be honest, he's really very remarkable."

Saismoya was nodding with all his might, not minding that this would draw notice to his nearly bald head.

"Of course there are others like him amongst those with high status. However, most nobles and royals will give people the impression of being so high up. There really aren't too many people in the world who are like Heika, he's really very unique."

"Really?"

"Since Lady Flynn and Hei....and the Colonel are quite close, then you shouldn't be someone bad."

Dakaskos had smiled shyly, there was a blush spreading across the area around his receding hairline. Saismoya was gazing at his bald and shiny pate while saying enviously, "Your hairstyle seems to be very convenient."

"This? This really is very light and convenient! Does the Captain want to give it a try? You don't have to worry about the volume of hair left, and it looks so manly! Also, you can rinse your head while you're washing your face, it's both convenient and economical. However, the drawback of it is that when your wife calls you 'You bald donkey!' you'll feel the urge to cry."

Affected by Dakaskos' laughter, Flynn's expression lightened up as she said, "You said that I'm not someone bad...."

She never thought that she would get this kind of retribution. Logically she should have been hated, mocked and looked down upon, because she had been prepared to betray the Mazoku nobles to their enemies although she had been fully aware of the consequences.

".....you said something that hurts me a lot." (Flynn)

"Why, what is it, Lady Flynn?"

The muscular man of the sea Saismoya had bent down to look at her. Flynn Gilbert shut her eyes tightly for a short while, then raised her head and said, "No, it's nothing, it's really nothing. We should try to find the room where the box is stored within the shortest time possible, then substitute the real one with the one we have. If we succeed in getting 'The Ends of the Wind', I think the Colonel will be greatly surprised. I really wonder what expression he would have then, don't you?"

She had purposely lightened her tone to spur herself on. The two men lifted the box and crossed the stone floor. If the box was really hidden in some part of the shrine, then that part would be the one most heavily guarded. Even if the three of them could find that room, it was still uncertain whether they could successfully enter that room. However, no one dared to voice this out loud.

After ascending their third flight of stairs, they entered a space which was rather different from the ones before. The polished stone floors were now covered with an earth-yellow carpet, it felt so comfortable when their feet sank into it, giving them the urge to rest their tired feet then and there. Out of the five luxurious looking doors leading out from it, two were open, and one of the walls of that room was made entirely of glass. The arena was clearly visible from the room.

"This is great!"

"It seems that we're in the VIP room, this proves that the credibility of beverage sellers surpasses hat of others."

Flynn approached the window and touched the glass window with her

trembling fingers. She didn't dare to look down.

What if a tragedy that she couldn't accept happened?

"Ah! Captain, Lady Flynn! It's Heika! It's Heika! I think the first round just ended. Oh no, he can't stand up! Don't tell me he's injured his foot? Ah ~ if only the Sergeant were here ~ "

"I don't see the Colonel."

"I think I saw him in that shaded area, that's probably the place where competitors prepare themselves before entering the arena?"

"That's great...." (Flynn)

"I never expected that troublemakers would worm themselves into a place like this!"

She hadn't even finished expressing her relief before she heard a familiar voice coming from behind.

Saiamoya, the hero of the seas, had reacted before the other two people standing at the window. He rushed at the enemy by covering the shortest distance possible and thrust the tip of his sword against the enemy's chest.

However the opponent had reacted even sooner. He stood unmoving at the entrance while a ripple of silver could be seen cutting through the air. The shiny wire extending from his fingertips had firmly trapped his target faraway.

"Uh..."

Flynn was struggling to breathe, her fingers clutching at her pale throat. She was trying with all her might to grip at the wire entrapping herself, but was failing since the wire had sunk deep into her skin. Dakaskos whirled around and helped up Flynn, who had collapsed onto the floor.

"Stop moving! Else her head comes off!"

Saismoya raised his sword to about the height of his waist, but took no further action. "Sheath your sword then place it at your feet. If you don't do as I say, this lady will suffer all the consequences. You don't want to see her die in such an ugly way, do you? It'll be both ugly and filthy."

"....Ma....xine.....why're.....you....here..."

Flynn had spat out the name of this cold-blooded man with much difficulty. Nigel Weiss Maxine approached the center of the room carefully, reducing the distance between himself and Flynn.

"Why? I should ask you that question. I was wondering why I could see that familiar silver hair, then it turned out that it really is the famous leader of Caloria. Although her own people are struggling to survive on that completely destroyed land, the wife of the regent came here to sell beverages and make small profits, she even sneaked here to watch World's Best Fighter Tournament, I think the people of your land would be really disappointed by your actions."

Flynn's mouth was opened wide as she tried to get oxygen into her lungs. Every time Maxine pulled a bit harder at the wire, a red mark would be left on her neck. The man raised her chin with his thumb and pushed at her back from behind, causing her to fall down backwards.

"Why....did this happen..?" (Flynn)

Although it was forced out, there was still a hint of mockery in it. Even though her life was in the hands of her opponent, Flynn was still unwilling to surrender.

Maxine looked exhausted, the complete opposite of what he usually looked like. His ponytail, typical of those from the Shou Shimaron army, had come loose, and his thin face was covered with injuries. His ragged army uniform was spattered with blood, and the fearsome impression he gave others had lessened because of his agitated and exhausted expression. His voice didn't sound threatening any longer, it sounded more like the hoarse voice of an old man.

"You asked me why I look like this? Don't pretend any more, Lady! No, Melind Gilbert, this is all thanks to your partner, that detestable Mazoku! He looks just like an ordinary brat, but he completely fooled me!"

"Hey! Be careful of what you say. The stars, the moon, the sun, even I won't tolerate something so disrespectful of Heika! I won't hesitate at killing you, although I'm usually a gentle strong man!"

"Captain, coming from you, this doesn't mean anything...." Maxine had twisted Flynn's arm with his left hand and pressed her face against the glass

window. Maybe because he was overly furious, there was no trace of his usually calm attitude.

"How in the world did you get to know these Mazoku? Tell me! Did you lure him with your beauty?! That bastard! I only got the cooperation of those Shinzoku after much difficulty, and I even managed to find a carriage. Damn, just thinking of it all makes me so angry!"

"...let go..."

"And after arriving at the arena after much difficulty, I see puny little Caloria competing against Dai Shimaron in the finals?! Don't make me laugh! You're just a tiny country in the south with a rotten harbor! You think you can compete against others in the finals? Hey, you baldy!"

"What, moustache man!"

Nigel Weiss Maxine gestured towards the cloth-covered box with his head.

There had been an unexpected development in the arena.

Of course I hadn't doubted von Bielefeld-kyo's abilities, because he had very easily dodged the attack of the double blades and had had his sword tip pointed against the opponent's throat within five minutes. I hadn't been so paralyzed by shock at his performance that I was unable to get up from my chair, definitely not. Right, definitely not, I had just been a little bit shocked. All the sweat from my tightly clenched fists had dried earlier on.

The dedicated cheerleading group for Shimaron (almost all of the audience) had been furious at the overly short match, paper cups, waste paper, junk food wrappings, even the cushioning for the seats, all the rubbish they could lay their hands on were thrown onto the snowy ground. In other words, it had been Dai Shimaron and not us who had let the people down.

"The people of Dai Shimaron really have no class ~"

It seems that the general theory of sympathizing with the weak was non-existent in Shimaron.

Von Bielefeld-kyo, who had obtained a complete victory despite the

disadvantage of having a smaller physique, was carrying his yet unsheathed sword and heading tiredly yet victoriously towards the resting room....

"Wa....! Wolf!"

He had slipped and fallen face down while heading towards us. Walking on the hardened snowy ground had caused him to slip and fall, banging his waist and right leg hard.

"How come you fell down?! Are you alright?"

Jozak and I hurriedly ran out and helped Wolfram up. Poor Wolfram seemed unable to walk on his own and was even gazing blankly into the sky while muttering, "....This...this is so embarrassing..."

"Relax, don't worry, there's really nothing to be ashamed of! We'll pretend that we didn't see that last scene. Your handsome and dashing appearance must have fatally charmed so many girls...." (Yuuri)

"Getting noticed by human females is nothing to be happy about!" (Wolfram)

"Don't worry! Your Excellency, females are prohibited from entering the arena, so it will actually be those disgusting men who get attracted to you!" (Jozak)

"Are you trying to make this worse?!"

Loud cheers from the men were resonating throughout the arena, but this bishounen from the Mazoku tribe was not the type that liked being pursued by fans. Now he was scrunching his face and rubbing his waist because of the pain, it seems that it hurt him to make any small movement.

"Let me challenge my so-called healing powers." (Yuuri)

"Don't do this sort of thing before the competition, don't waste your energy. Who knows what sudden situation will be waiting for us!"

I got a scolding. But maybe because I was feeling relieved as we were leading by one point, it didn't feel too bad.

However an unexpected progression in events occurred.

Murata Ken, who was looking at the opponents' resting area with his hands positioned like binoculars around his eyes, suddenly let out a crazy yell, "Ah...?"

"What is it? Murata, why that strange cry?"

".....the person preparing to battle against us in the second round is a man we know very well."

"A man we know very well? Can it be Maxine? That's impossible isn't it? That fellow shouldn't be able to participate right? No, wait! What if he's got a twin brother?"

Our opponent's second representative was supporting himself using a 'modern salmon weapon' [1], his large high-quality army boots stepping firmly on the white snow.

He had a head of golden hair that was illuminated by the firelight, a slightly crooked to the left but pronounced hawk nose, and a split chin, broad shoulders and chest, those would be evident even in an x-ray, and he had the nickname of 'Denver's Wild Horse'. Just when I was distracted, he started calling out to me, "Hi! What is it? You wimpy Heika, why do you look like a sheep that's eaten raw mutton?" What a polite greeting.

"Why is that American football player here?! And thinking about it, what does a sheep eating raw mutton look like?"

Wolfram, who was sitting down, craned his neck to try and see what was going on, but had to give up because of his injured waist. Adalbert von Grantz was standing in the middle of the arena like a Transformer. His sword, which resembled a fresh salmon, was embedded into the snowy ground, and he was leaning with his right elbow on the sword handle. When I had first arrived at this world, he had toyed around with my soul, and even extracted the memories of the past languages I had known. He never attempted to conceal his anti-Mazoku beliefs, and had even betrayed his Mazoku comrades without hesitation.

Wolfram, who had finally identified the enemy after difficulty, was saying in a voice filled with shock and anger, "Adalbert! Why is that fellow in Dai Shimaron?!"

Suddenly, I heard a dry chuckle. Jozak, gripping a long-axe in his hands while laughing so hard that his orange hair was rippling along with his laughter, said, "Old buddy Grantz, I really have to hand it to you! You're a pure blooded Mazoku

from a well-known family, yet you're willing to become a dog for Dai Shimaron!"

"Why? Why did you ally with Dai Shimaron..."

I knew that man hated the Mazoku, but I didn't believe that he was cooperating with Shimaron because he trusted the humans. Maybe because he had sensed my bafflement, Jozak explained to me in a tone still tinged with humor, "I think he found out from someone or other that Heika would be participating in the competition. And anyway, overpowering the original representative for the competition and taking his place in the competition wouldn't be something new to Mr Grantz. It seems that he won't hesitate at any method to force Heika into danger. You're being targeted by a very dangerous person! That person is really very stubborn."

"What....what despair? What....what stubbornness?"

The arena was packed with more than five million people, could I beat this sworn enemy in front of them? This reminded me of the defensive stance we had once taken in the latter half of a baseball game, it was a bad memory since we had been so nervous that the opponents might score a home run or that the three pitchers would succeed in making good strikes.

Wolf got up from the bench despite his pain, "Let me."

"No ~ young sir, I won't let you do that." (Jozak)

Jozak pressed on Wolf's shoulder with one finger, Wolf frowned and stopped moving.

"Let me challenge that fellow, this is actually a chance that's hard to come by!"

He swung his weapon around twice within that rather cramped resting area. Although his tone sounded merry, there was not a hint of laughter within the depths of his eyes.

"Since Shimaron will be represented by an excellent pure-blooded Mazoku, then the Mazoku should be represented by me. Let this human child who's wandered around the wilderness for more than twelve years meet him in battle! Anyway we have no loyalty to speak of, I might as well take this chance to fight with him."

"Wait a bit! Wait a bit, Jozak! I don't doubt you at all!"

"Of course I know this, Heika, but the person to fight him should be me and no one else."

We had already decided on this order of appearance in the first place. Since this was the elimination contest of the 'World's Best Fighter Tournament', it wouldn't be against the rules to let Wolfram continue fighting in the next round, since he had won the first round. However, I just couldn't bear to let him continue competing when I saw his injured waist. More so since the opponent was the American footballer.

"Caloria's representative, please enter the arena!" Two men who looked very much like they were the judges were hustling us along with the exact same tone. Adalbert was still leaning against his heavy duty sword and looking up at my panicked expression. The third son was sitting silently on the bench with his arms crossed in front of his chest. Maybe because of his stamina as a soldier, he wasn't revealing any expression of pain. Jozak, on the other hand, was full of vigor and was rolling his shoulders about, seemingly unable to control the excitement he felt.

"I'm sorry, Wolf. I know you're really good, but just let Jozak go out this time." "Hmph!"

"Don't be angry! Won't it be alright if you request to participate again after you recover?"

"I didn't really want to fight that fellow anyway."

"Huh? I thought you wanted to fight him because he had insulted you once before...... Then why did you volunteer to go out there? Or maybe I misunderstood you?"

The whole arena had become even noisier; this signified that the battle between the two warriors would soon begin. Wolfram's arms remained crossed in front of his chest, and he was trying his best to speak in an unemotional tone. Those emerald green eyes that reminded me of the depths of a green lake were trained on his team-mate.

"From a neutral perspective, Gurrier and Adalbert's abilities are evenly

matched, so I had just been planning to fight the opponent first to waste away his (Adalbert's) energy."

Who had taught him the principle of 'sacrificing oneself for the benefit of everyone else'? I was sliding his sword into the sheath he had handed to me while listening to this extremely stubborn bishounen speaking calmly.

"Even if there wasn't any guarantee I would definitely win, at least I could have wasted some of Adalbert's energy and disrupted his emotions. Then if Gurrier could remain calm and deal with the opponent with his usual capabilities, we could easily get pass this round.....what are you doing, Yuuri? Take your hand off my forehead!"

"Mm....no, I was wondering if you had a fever...."

A youth who looked like he was in his teens poked his head in from the entrance of the resting area. His reddish-brown hair was cut very short, it was evident that he wasn't a soldier of Shimaron, but was one of the workers from the arena. Murata Ken, who had remained silent all the while, left the wall he had been leaning on and headed towards the youth. After a short conversation, he had taken the object in his hands.

"This really sounds like a great battle plan, von Bielefeld kyo! However, events seem to have taken a turn for the worse!"

Although he wasn't wearing any spectacles, his eyes behind his contact lenses were sparkling with a black light. He handed the wine bottle he was holding to me. The dark brown bottle had a deep red label attached to it, and large characters had been roughly scrawled onto the empty space of that label.

"Try reading it, but I have to warn you that the writing is so messy that it's hard to decipher it."

"I told you before that I'm really no good at reading these characters. What does it say? Ehm.... Going through the words......If...if.....don't wish.....woman to die.....lose the competition.....I'll kill her if you tell anyone else....is this a threatening letter?! But who's the woman it means? What on earth does this all mean? I think it was a wrong delivery, we've to find that youth just now, he can't have gone far. Hey...!"

I hurriedly poked my head out into the corridor outside, but Murata pulled me back with a serious expression.

"Shibuya, I think there was no mistake. Captain Saismoya and Dakaskos should have arrived here by now, and if Lady Flynn had followed them here..."

"What? Why would Flynn follow them?! Didn't I tell her to wait on board the ship?"

"Is she the kind of person to succumb to orders meekly? This competition concerns the honor of Caloria!"

Flynn Gilbert's past doings flashed through my brain within that short two seconds. Everyone else's lives were suddenly overshadowed by that.

The conclusion I could make was that she'd probably come.

"Ah...oh no! Oh no, this is really bad! It said that we should look up, where does this up refer to?"

We rushed out of the resting area and looked up into the dark sky which was still snowing, the moon, which had hidden itself behind the clouds, was still visible.

"Over there!"

Murata had discovered their whereabouts. It was a building resembling a shrine; all stories above the third floor had glass windows, I could see several elegant millionaires watching the battle behind the glass windows. Those were probably the VIP seats, maybe there were even wine bars and luxurious sofas in there. There was a (person dressed as a) wine deliverer standing behind one of the windows.

"Ah, it's Flynn! Didn't I tell her to stay on the ship...?"

It seemed that she had sneaked her way into the party. I couldn't be sure because of the distance, but her neck seemed to be restrained by a force from behind, she looked as if she were in pain. Standing behind Flynn, who was pressed against the window, was a man with a familiar hairstyle and beard. It was Nigel Weiss Maxine!

"Why is that fellow.... Here? Oh no! Murata, it said that if we didn't want her

to get hurt, we should lose the competition on purpose, right?"

"That's right."

I looked back at the arena. Our representative was knocking back Adalbert's curved sword with his axe. The sword tip bounced up from the ground and brushed across his opponent's chin. Jozak was swinging his axe around with the grace of a baseball player, with his full concentration on the competition.

It seemed that he was enjoying himself.

"So Maxine and the American footballer had planned this between them? The two of them had met before at Flynn's estate. I thought there had been something suspicious at that time...so they have this kind of understanding between each other?"

Wolfram, who had lost his qualifications as a competitor because of his waist injury, was frowning and saying in surprise, "Although Adalbert betrayed the Mazoku tribe, I don't think he would resort to such underhanded means."

"Anyway, I think we should stop the competition from going on! Hey...! Hey, judges...!"

"Shibuya! Don't tell me you're going to complain to the judges that we're being threatened?"

"Huh? Can't we complain about something like this...darn, then what should we do! How can we lose without arousing any suspicion..."

All of us were perfectly clear of Jozak Gurrier's capabilities. Based on his abilities and tact, it was possible for him to purposely lose the competition and fool both the judges and audience while at it. However, we had to convince Jozak and get him to agree with this right now, I found it really hard to tell him this.

Wolfram linked his arm round my neck and gazed at me, "Yuuri, listen to me carefully! This is just my personal opinion, but I don't think we should give up the competition for this type of woman. Just let Jozak continue to do his best! What do you think?"

"....this is your way of doing things..."

"That's right, this is what I think we should do. Anyway you're really very

wimpy, you should listen to what I said."

I was apologizing to someone in my mind, even if it's just this once, please allow me to succumb to the evil side who is threatening us. I think I should be apologizing to the gods who represent the spirit of sportsmanship. I linked my own arm round Wolfram's neck, and drawing him closer to myself, I apologized to him too, "I'm sorry, I'm always this wimpy, I really am quite embarrassed as well, especially since you managed to gain one point despite the risk of injuries. I'll probably cause all your efforts to go to waste."

Wolfram sighed loudly and continued in a dramatic tone, "That's perfectly correct."

"This is all because you're too wimpy. But although I'm perfectly aware of that, I'm still willing to follow you, do you know why that is?"

"I don't know."

Von Bielefeld-kyo undid a button in front of his chest, his emerald green eyes seemed even brighter against the reflection of the white snow.

"Wrack your brains and think about it before I give up and leave you."

After apologizing to Jozak, I made a 'stopping temporarily' request to the judges.

1. Jump up ↑

Yuuri means that Adalbert's sword looks like a preserved salmon

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Chapter 12

It was only a short while after the disrupted competition had been resumed that Jozak's axe was dislodged from his grasp by the second representative from Dai Shimaron. His condition was the complete opposite from the colorful performance he had displayed before the competition had been paused. His opponent managed to prevent him from making any attempt at retrieving his weapon, and he was thus forced to surrender.

"....ah..."

Flynn, whose neck was encircled by the string, could only utter a faint sigh. Her tears, caused by extreme pain, had dried earlier on, and both her arms and knees felt weak. The reason for this was lack of oxygen throughout her whole body. Her fingers were struggling weakly to protest this lack of oxygen.

"Look carefully, that proud warrior is throwing away his pride to save someone like you, this is hilarious. That man is a true warrior, a woman like you would never understand, but he's a real man who survived from the harsh battlefield!"

To a soldier, surviving from Artellino had a truly special significance.

"However, to save a despicable woman like you, they're willing to take this humiliation.... Those people with black hair and black eyes really have strange principles, it's so strange that I can't even begin to comprehend it. Forget it, if they also manage to lose in the third round, then I'll feel....eh?"

Flynn's throat felt much more comfortable all of a sudden, with a huge amount of oxygen flowing in. The string had broken and her throat was instantly released. Flynn took the opportunity to get down on her knees (and thus escape from the string). When she looked up with her tear-filled eyes, she saw Maxine staring at the door, with a scarlet whip encircling his arms and neck.

There was an extremely beautiful woman standing in front of the startled people. She had long wavy hair and clear, (almost) transparent skin, while those

emerald green eyes which reminded one of the depths of a lake were sparkling with a sense of justice.

"You big scoundrel, release her at once! Or I'll use my whip of doom on you! I'll never forgive anyone who defiles objects of beauty!"

"Who are you?! Also, warn me before you attack next time!"

The woman didn't seem to have heard the latter part of what he had said; she was walking in elegant steps towards him with whip in one hand. Her head of wavy waist-long hair, which was her pride and joy, was glinting with a golden light. Her weapon, which she was rather proud of, was made of scarlet leather. The whip was light and narrow, long yet durable, and could be easily manipulated in mid-air; it was evidently a rare item made by skilled workmen.

"I'm the beautiful lady warrior who fights in the name of love – Cecilia! What do you think of this name? I've already handed the plans for that novel to Anissina, but she's busy with her experiments all day long and can't find time to help me write it, I really want to be a hero to all those children too ~ "

Although she had thought it up herself, her slogan still seemed to lack some pep. She placed both hands at the back of her head after twirling them around, this was her classic pose which stimulated others' senses. As usual, she was wearing a boldly revealing outfit, it was one that revealed her entire back.

Maxine, who had his hands trapped by the whip, said something he never should have said, "Where did this hag come from?! You old over-exposing maniac!"

"....What did you say...?"

Everyone present was frozen by shock.

Please wait! This man's more interested in little girls! He's got a psychological problem! You don't look old in the least, and you aren't any old hag ~ Before Saismoya could help him with a long explanation, Lady Cheri had defended herself.

"What did you say, I couldn't hear clearly enough...!"

The whip lashed repeatedly at Maxine at the speed of sound, and since the

space of time between each lash was relatively short, the victim's cries of agony weren't too long as well. 'Waah!', 'Yaah!', 'Yow!' and other monosyllabic moans were heard along with the sound of scattering of the remnants of his clothes.

It was all Maxine's own fault, since he had gone against the rule of 'Don't offend or make the Queen cry before the food is cooked properly' (a popular saying in Shin Makoku). No one was willing to stick their nose in when someone was as brave (or as stupid) as to anger the ex-Queen.

".....Unn, Gaa, Gulp! Uhh!"

The symphony of the whip lashes finally ended, and the man collapsed on the ground, something seemed to be stuck in his throat. The spectators were somehow hoping for even more interesting developments. However, the man flopping limply on the luxurious rug looked a lot like a mop.

It was such a pitiful sight.

"I just came to find out why the beverages haven't been delivered yet after such a long time, but what do I see? I happened onto a villain abusing a girl; I'll never let something that despicable happen. Even if beauty is a sin, that's no reason for someone to strangle you like that."

She kicked lightly at the prone figure on the ground with the tip of her pointy boots.

"The more beautiful a flower is, the more thorns it has! If you really desire it, you can't just depend on skill, you have to practice your manliness as well. Here, Hewbert."

She handed her whip to the golden haired youth who had followed her, and he tied Maxine up skillfully. It seemed that he was rather experienced in these matters.

"This...this can't be....Your Majesty Lady Celi? Why are you here...."

The ex Maou had her index finger pressed against her lips, shushing him up.

"Please don't refer to me with such a boring title. I'm now a supporter of free love, I've given up titles and power long ago. There is only love, beauty and a noble heart left in my hands and within myself!"

Coming from the lips of someone else, this might cause a certain amount of disgust, but it sounded completely convincing from her. And anyway, nobody, except those sons of hers, would have been able to resist her charm.

"I was invited here by a friend from Shimaron. They told me that I would be able to admire the bloody battle scenes between warriors, but if I sat nearer to the front, I'd probably be able to enjoy it more up close...."

Hewbert was bending down and talking to his mistress with a smile, saying lightly, "My Lady, this is because the World's Best Fighter Tournament prohibits women from entering the arena."

"That's right, and anyway, it's good enough to be able to watch it from the VIP seats. Although I won't be able to admire the sweat dripping off the competitors, I won't need to sit there pout in the snow and rain, it's much more comfortable this way. Oh, I remember that you're Dakaskos who works under Gunter! You're the soldier who's capable of almost everything, aren't you? Like clearing a clogged drain, or repairing the shelter?"

"Ah! Yes! No, oh god!"

He didn't dare to say that it was actually the plumber Clansian (she had meant).

Saismoya, who'd never had the opportunity to see Her Majesty before, was kneeling with his head pressed against the floor.

"Uh...Please, who's this with the kappa hairstyle? Forget it, it doesn't matter, you don't need to be so formal. I'm not Cecilia von Spitzberg kyo now, I'm the hunter of love Celi. Just forget all those annoying formalities when we're in this country!"

Cecillia's attractive rosy lips were curved in an enticing smile. She was leaning over with the curve of her breasts faintly visible.

"Yes...yes, of course!"

"Captain, Captain Saismoya! There's a red waterfall trickling from your nose!"

"No no no no, no! It's not like that! No!"

"It's alright! Captain, nosebleeds reflect your true feeling. But what do you

think of my outfit? Does this reflect early spring?"

Of course, it was her curvy and beautiful body that was wrapped within her clothes. The warrior of the seas was in an embarrassing and pitiful state after being attacked by the sexy pheromone queen.

A chuckle could be heard from behind her, it sounded like suppressed laughter. It seemed that there wasn't just her favorite follower Hewbert who was accompanying her on her quest for free love.

A human, who had his eyes narrowed, approached her then pressed his face against her golden hair. Although his looks weren't anything special, he didn't make anyone feel uneasy, and he was clearly an elegant man with pleasant manners. His clothes were monochromatic, and he wasn't sporting any other adornments. However, judging from the superior material and the perfect measurements of his clothing, someone with good judgment would realize their true worth. He had short reddish brown hair with specks of silver in it, proving that he was no soldier. Based on human years, he would be a middle aged man about thirty or forty years old.

Although the two looked very compatible, they were actually lovers with a huge age gap.

"Ah, my beautiful dream lover. Didn't I just praise you? I said that although this thin silk reflecting early spring is beautiful, you yourself are several times more beautiful than all the newly emerging trees, leaves or blossoms! Or wasn't what I said satisfactory enough for you, although this is the first time I've been bewitched by true love?"

"Oh, don't! Of course not! Fanfan, my adorable man, everything you say makes me relive the memories I had when I was just a young maiden." Fanfan?! This middle-aged gentleman with a splendid beard had such a cute nickname?!

"What are you talking about! My beautiful nymph of spring, you're always a young maiden to me."

But she was actually mother to three sons.

Saismoya had to swallow his blood from his nosebleed after hearing this torrent of honey-like praises, he was having goose-bumps from hearing all this.

There would definitely be no one like him on the seas, humans were really scary!

On the other hand, Dakaskos, who had been mistaken for a plumber, suddenly remembered von Christ kyo's dramatic and suffocating diary. A few million copies of that book had been sold, proving that women and girls everywhere were very susceptible to sentences like that. He might as well try talking like that the next time he made his wife angry, just in case it worked. Anyway, he might as well memorize the words 'Your head is spring to me forever'......it was evident that something terrible would happen (to him) if he ever said that.

"Oh, what's the matter with you two? Your mouths are wide open. Oh right, I've to introduce Fanfan to you. This is Stefan Fanberlain. He's got a large business in Shimaron."

So this is why he's called Fanfan? Then there's no help for it since it really is his name.

The middle-aged gentleman kissed his elder lover's forehead gently, and the soldiers instantly felt goose-bumps rising on their arms.

"My business isn't that large, is it? My lover, you're praising me too much. Compared to your beauty, my humble business isn't worth even as much as one of your toes. Just like the grass on the plains, how could they be compared to the sparkling stars in the sky?"

Although this comparison was plainly inappropriate, Lady Cheri was chuckling happily at his words. It seems that this ex queen was in a good mood!

"Oh, right, who's this adorable lady? Where is she from? Your hair is so pretty, what flower is your hair oil made from?"

"...that...that..."

She couldn't utter a word. The perceptive Hewbert immediately got some water for Flynn from the next room. After moisturizing her throat, she could finally find her voice.

"Please forgive me for sitting so improperly on the floor....I'm Flynn Gilbert from Caloria....then....you are..."

"Me? I'm Cecilia, the hunter for free love! But please call me Celi. I can't

believe that he could exert such pain on someone as pretty as you. This type of man is the worst possible! Why did this happen, Flynn? Was it hatred stemming from love? Or was it because another man had fallen for you? Ah ~ beauty really is a sin! Making all those men your prisoners of love!"

"Ulp....Lady Celi, Lady Flynn and Maxine aren't lovers, but their relationship is much more complicated than that between lovers."

"What? Dakaskos, you're saying that their relationship is much more complex and entangled than a muddy swamp?! Ah ~ in that case, then maybe both of them have their own families...god! Just imagining all this is making me so excited. I say Flynn, tell me about everything! I could be your advisor for love, if you don't mind...oh!"

Maxine, who had been ensnared by the ex queen's whip, was moaning on the ground.

"Oh no, what have I done?! I forgot all about the gentleman I overpowered!"

"What gentleman!"

Flynn had uttered a low cry filled with sorrow; anger was causing her to shiver uncontrollably.

"This man is a filthy beast!"

"Really? Beast...this noun sounds rather exciting....but gloomy-looking men aren't my type...however, he looks so cute when he's being whipped! Haha, how will he react if I kick him?"

"Waah!"

"Hahaha! You beast, you beast! That's right, I just want to kick you!"

Dakaskos was starting to shiver. There were three people in Shin Makoku who should never be angered, they were Shinou Heika, Lady Celi and Miss Anissina.

"But lady...Lady Celi, we should inform the Colonel about this as soon as possible. He might still have his hands tied because of us. He might even purposely lose the third round for our sake. The next round should be....the colonel he...."

"Who do you mean by the colonel? Oh right, by the way, Flynn, did you see my

handsome son? Wasn't that so cute? During the time when that child was stumbling while learning to walk, and while he couldn't sleep without his teddy bear, I was the first one who gave him a sword to play with! Although his father had greatly protested because of his age, one night he stabbed his own beloved grey teddy bear with that short sword....oh no! We should inform everyone below there that you've been released. Alright! This should do the trick."

Cecilia ran lightly to the window and untied the colorful silk scarf around her shoulders, then waved elegantly towards the resting area of the Calorian team.

"I say Dakaskos, this is a rare opportunity, please pour me a glass of grape wine. I've been waiting so long for the beverages....but how did the two of you become beverage vendors? Don't tell me it's because you were unsatisfied with the army supplies? I rather pity the two of you, you had to move such a heavy cooler."

"By the way, where's the box?!"

Flynn, Saismoya and Dakaskos raised their heads simultaneously and gazed at the counterfeit box covered by the green cloth. It had been placed beside the wall all along.

"Mother?!"

The third son was startled upon seeing the woman who looked exactly like himself. Murata and I, thinking that his waist was hurting him, had automatically reached out to support him.

"Don't force yourself to stand up, Wolf! You're acting like a first-year student on his first school visit, getting so excited about seeing your mother.....the mother you mean.....is that Lady Celi?!"

I looked back out of reflex, and saw a beaming Lady Cecilia von Spitzberg standing at the very spot where Flynn had been captured before. Her oniongreen gown looked very enticing, she really was the sexy queen for whom spring had arrived earlier than for others around her. Murata was frowning while looking at her, mumbling, "Oh ~ so that's her!"

"Why would mother be in Dai Shimaron..."

"I say Wolf, there's only one possible answer for that, although I know that you won't agree with it."

The answer was probably that the newest lover for this supporter of free love was a businessman in Shimaron.

"Your mom's probably seeing a man younger than you are. Anyway, Lady Celi being so happy probably means that Flynn Gilbert is safe now. No matter how cheerful von Spitzberg kyo is, she probably can't bear to stand beside a dead hostage waving her scarf."

"Don't say anything bad about my mother!"

"But I didn't!"

However, this could be counted as good news. Although I still felt apologetic towards Jozak who had been forced to lose on purpose, we still had a last glimmer of hope. The results at this current stage were one victory and one loss, so we were even with our competitors. As long as we managed to get a tie in the third round, we would be able to extend the competition. I wasn't sure whether the contest rules had stated a maximum number of rounds allowed in the competition, but at least we could extend the time before we lost.

I was preparing to persuade Jozak, feeling so apologetic that I was near to kneeling, but to my surprise he agreed without hesitation. He stood in front of my apologetic self while brushing off the snow on his sword blade.

"It's not necessary to apologize, I'm your soldier, I'll obey whatever orders you have for me."

He, who had successfully acted the part of the loser, was sitting on the bench and sighing, but it was evident that he really wasn't all that disappointed. He was bent over with his forehead against his knees.

The one who was feeling agitated right now was actually his opponent Adalbert, who felt that his opponent had purposely lost his grip on his weapon and to lose, so he was protesting with all his might to the judges, he didn't look in the least like someone who had just won. However, the judges would never change their decision about the results, especially since the people of Shimaron were cheering and waving their yellow flags with all their might. He couldn't

request a rematch, because it would just be asking for trouble if he angered the audience.

Now Caloria had their last hope. It was all thanks to Lady Celi for rescuing Flynn, now we should take advantage of this opportunity.

As long as the competitor for this third round gave a good performance, we would have a chance at being the champions.

"Everyone, let's look forward to the performance of our third representative! If that fellow could at least manage to tie in the battle, the results for this competition can be reset all over again...."

Everyone present was silent and looked extra gloomy, with six pairs of eyes fixed on me.

Wait a minute, I'm the third representative, right?

"Waah...! Oh no, oh no, oh no! What do I do? Murata?! What can I do? Wolf?!"

The last competitor left was indeed a very weak one.

"So our only alternative is to give up the competition."

"No, we can't do that! We've just one last step before achieving our aim! And the problem with Flynn has already been settled, so this is our opportunity! It'd be such a pity to back out at the last moment, I won't do that...!"

"Then you'll have to go out there, Heika."

Jozak, who still had a trace of regret in his expression, was muttering.

"Anyway if you're ever in any danger, Heika, His Excellency and I won't ignore that fact. Even if we lose our qualifications for breaking the rules, we'll run out there to protect you if necessary. So don't worry about that! Since they don't have any hostages left with them, we'll be able to start a killing spree without need to worry about anyone else. I'd slash and chop away at them within the shortest time possible, killing all of them!"

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"Are..are you angry?"
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[&]quot;No."

Even Wolfram, who was sitting with one leg crossed over the other, was nodding in agreement to this, it seems that he too agreed with Jozak's opinion of 'killing them all'.

"Even if you order me not to kill anyone, it won't be of any use. To us, Caloria isn't as important as winning this competition or you, Heika. If Heika wishes to go out, His Excellency and I won't stop you from doing so!"

The audience comprised about five million people. They were looking forward to a full-scale bloodbath involving real weapons, and it was very probable that I wouldn't be able to retreat safely after entering the arena.

But...

I bit my lip and gripped the metallic baseball bat my friend had chosen for me.

But there was just one last step to go.

Just one more step to achieve my aim.

The climax in the sixteen years of my life could happen today, and anyway...

"Shibuya, I told you before, you should get used to being protected."

Murata was about to push up his glasses with his index finger, but then realized that he wasn't wearing them.

"Is that the conclusion you made after listening to my advice?"

"I've a whole list here of sentences with 'I told you so' that you've made! You told me before that there's a special relationship between us, and you also said that you had the ability to aid a powerful king. And before that I....because something unknown sparked off my own powers, I felt that depending on a power I'm unable to control is something very dangerous. But now I know, if I use that to win the competition...we could use our powers together...." (Yuuri)

"No!" (Murata)

Murata was shaking his head vehemently and cutting me off.

"That'd be too dangerous, even if the snow can lessen your nausea, this is human land after all, and moreover the shrine is just next door! No one can predict what could happen next! I can't let you put yourself in danger like this....since you're determined to participate, I won't stop you. That's what you want me to say, isn't it? You're actually wishing that I'd say 'I knew you'd do this' in place of someone else."

"Mm, then do what you've mentioned."

I rolled my neck around a few times to release the tension in my muscles. I had to practice swinging this new bat a few times before actually using it. I couldn't quite understand why Murata was so worried, as my condition had improved a lot since. It seems that the gods in other kingdoms didn't have that big an effect on me.

My friend was scratching his wet hair, which had darkened in color due to moisture; I never thought he would look so worried.

"Argh, I don't want to say anymore. I never thought that things would turn out this way...Shibuya, please, just don't get hurt. I'll teach you a secret move! Listen carefully, if you're in any danger you should attack the weak spot of your opponent. Do you know where that is?"

I'd unconsciously pressed against that spot in question. Of course I knew the weak spot of every male in the world, but to ask me to kick my opponent down there.....this reminded me of the time a stray ball had hit me there, so I pressed my hips tighter together. To think that a ball could get past all those protective gear, just thinking about it made me break out in a cold sweat.

"Promise me, don't pity the opponent no matter what. If you sense anything wrong, protect yourself at all costs."

"Murata, do you need to go into such details? You seem to be very clear about who our opponents would send out or the powers they would have. Don't tell me they, like us, placed their weakest link at the very last...."

The whole arena was resounding with the cheers and feet-stamping of the audience. It seems that the third representative of Dai Shimaron had prepared himself. The vibrations resulting from their stamping resembled that of an earthquake, it felt a bit like the first time the powers from that box had been released.

Tension, uneasiness and a longing for justice were making my stomach hurt.

"According to what you said..."

Cecilia von Spitzberg, Flynn Gilbert, Captain Saismoya and Dakaskos were holding a conference. Hewbert was tossing the trussed up Maxine outside, while Stefan Fanberlain was waiting just outside the door. He was a businessman from Shimaron after all, so they couldn't let him overhear their plan to get the box back.

"So 'The Ends of the Wind' is in this shrine of Dai Shimaron?"

Everything was news to Lady Celi, who had left her own country for quite some time. Flynn, Dakaskos and Saismoya had given her detailed reports about everything that had happened since then, except for what had happened with Weller kyo. It was because informing her about the death of her son wasn't their duty, and since the third son His Excellency Wolfram was just downstairs, it would be far better for a member of the family to tell her.

Also, they didn't tell her about Shimaron mistaking his arm as the key to the box and thus causing the destruction of Caloria. The cute ex Maou who didn't resemble her actual age in the least was wrinkling her beautiful eyebrows slightly while saying, "Then, His Majesty....to Flynn he's the colonel, isn't he? He entered the World's Best Fighter Tournament to get the box back, didn't he? But His Highness asked you to substitute the real box with this counterfeit before the competition ended...why? Don't tell me he thinks they couldn't win...."

Cecilia had cocked her head to one side in bafflement, with her index finger pressed lightly against her slightly parted lips, then she exclaimed in an elegant ladylike voice, "No, wait a minute. You said His Highness?! Why is the double black Daikenja mentioned in your conversation? Logically no one could have seen him before? This reminds me, even his location...I say Dakaskos, are the hair and eyes of His Highness both black? Is he as beautiful as he appeared in his portrait?"

To a lower ranked soldier, being gripped at the shoulders and shaken by a beautiful woman was something that caused extreme confusion.

"No, no, no, his hair is of a strange golden shade, and his eyes are a strange blue."

"What...? How could that be? How could you say something that destroys the fantasy of so many young girls?"

"But, but, but His Highness really looks like that."

"Um...anyway my Lady you'll be able to meet with Mr. Kelujin after the competition.....now the main thing is to get the box back, we need your wisdom and strength for that...." (Flynn)

The calmest one in this situation was Flynn. But that was also because she had no inkling about the scary consequences if the Maou and Daikenja got together (and combined their powers).

"But Flynn, I'm not that familiar with the layout of this shrine, so I might not be able to locate the box for you, and anyway you can't force a woman to use her delicate arms to battle with the soldiers, right?"

An image rose simultaneously in the minds of the three people listening: that was (the image of) Maxine who had been beaten to the ground by the fury of the whip, he had come to such a pitiful ending. Just when everyone was still drifting within that terrible memory, Lady Celi suggested something completely unexpected.

"If nobody objects, we could ask Fanfan. I think he'd definitely help."

Everyone responded with an "Aah..?!" which sounded like the roaring sea.

The two Mazoku were wondering if Lady Celi had been driven crazy by love, while Flynn looked helplessly at everyone in turn without any idea what to say next. Cecilia approached the window and led her young lover over.

"I say Fanfan, can you please help us? I believe you'll help me, won't you?"

"Changing the box... 'The Ends of the Wind' with a counterfeit is it? That's such a bold plan."

Now everything's ended, there was no hope left, the bold plan had been unveiled right in front of a citizen of Shimaron, it seems that there wasn't any need for any further plans. If he alerted the guards now, everyone would be evicted from the shrine. All three prepared themselves for the worst. It seemed that there would be no alternative but to abandon this task and escape while

they could. Saismoya made this decision for everyone else since he was the oldest amongst the three.....

"Alright."

"Retreat! Lady Flynn, Dakaskos, we'll retreat....what did you say...?"

The elegant and gentle man shrugged lightly and revealed a smile that implied 'There's no help for it'.

"Since my irreplaceable beloved made this request, I can't deny her this."

Ah?

"Please don't weep with those beautiful eyes of yours, your wish is my command." What?!

"My beautiful Cecilia, please don't cry. Fulfilling your every wish is my pleasure."

What the...?!

All three of them were almost bowing over with shock upon hearing this. They were completely inexperienced in matters of love, and hence were stunned into silence upon learning his unexpected development. Saismoya was scratching his right hand and muttering, 'But Lord Fanfan, you're a businessman from Shimaron, aren't you? Doesn't helping us do something harmful to Shimaron make you a traitor to your own country?"

Stefan Fanberlain gave a warm smile and said something any person in the army would never dream of saying.

"If this country possessed the most powerful weapon in existence, and hence were able to take control over the whole world..... then our existence would become utterly meaningless. Listen, I'm a born businessman. Swords, shields, bows, arrows, steel, iron, they're all items I sell, and if possible, I'd hope to deal in business with multiple countries, and not just one single country. Alright, let's move, everyone! I might be able to help with locating the place we're headed to and overpowering some of the guards, but if it comes to battling with weapons, I'll have to hand it to you all."

This type of man, from a certain perspective, was the most dangerous one of

all. But they would have to believe in his spirit of business and cooperate with him for now. If the plan worked, maybe everyone might believe in free love as well!

"We can get Hewbert to go with us, he should come back any time now.... But Flynn, you can't go."

Cecilia beckoned towards Flynn Gilbert, who had been preparing to leave with the group of men.

"Rest here for a while, I can see that you're exhausted, moreover you haven't recovered from your injury, so you should just stay and watch the competition with me! It's great to be accompanied by a female friend."

After seeing off the men who were headed to the inner sanctum of the shrine, Cecilia and Flynn locked the doors of the VIP room. The ex queen sat on the long couch near the window and sipped elegantly at her wine. Since Flynn had less experience like this, she looked rather ill at ease.

"Are you worried about Fanfan?"

"No, my Lady. It's not that.... It's.... I don't suspect your lover...."

"Oh! It's alright, just call me Cecilia."

She placed her fair and delicate hand lightly on Flynn's tightly clenched fists which she had placed on her knees.

"Flynn, believe me, there won't be any problem with him, he's a born businessman, I can guarantee that what he just said weren't any lies. Stefan has always adhered to his own principles when dealing in matters. He'd choose to stay true to his own family when faced with the decision of choosing between his family and his country. But I'm different."

Her gaze had shifted to the exterior of the glass window, what Cecilia was saying now wasn't directed to anyone in particular, but rather was what had been hidden in her heart for a long time.

"....I'll never ever do anything that might harm my country again.....never...."

The falling snow was gradually increasing the region of white outside. The competitors and judges in the arena could no longer be seen clearly. However,

the beauty from the Mazoku tribe had resumed her light tone and tossed her golden hair back, "By the way, Flynn, do you have a lover? How many times have you been married?"

....but marriage isn't something that happens when you want it to.

"...I've been married once before, but my husband left before me."

"Oh god! Then you should find yourself a new lover! What about my Hewbert? Although he doesn't speak much, he's very alert, and he's also extremely capable! Oh, or maybe you already have someone else you like? Tell me, what's that person like? Older than you? Actually someone younger is also very cute, I'd like to greatly stress this point to you!"

"No, I'm already.....married to Caloria."

The name she had denied once before echoed in her ears, but Flynn managed to give a self deprecating smile. This had all been for the sake of her beloved land, for her husband and that world she loved so much.

"Really? You're so noble, you're able to resist temptation. A woman living for her country is the most beautiful."

Cecilia von Spitzberg kyo raised her wine glass to the height of her chest, then stopped.

"By the way, Flynn, I too was the leader of a country before this!"

"Huh...."

After learning of the high rank of the person before her, Flynn jumped up from her chair.

"Ah ~ it doesn't matter. Didn't I tell you, I'm now just a hunter for free love. I now understand perfectly what kind of a person I am. But at that time I hadn't understood myself well enough. I think I'm not suited for politics, nor did I want to rule or govern over a country, so I left everything to my brother. But my brother Stoffel is different from me, he has large plans for ruling, but....."

A drop of red liquid spilled from her tilted wine glass onto her lap.

"But now I regret what I did....you must remember what I said."

Cecilia gripped Flynn's hands firmly in hers. The two had been born in different lands, were of different races, and had completely different experiences in life, even their age differed greatly, yet through the touch of their skin, they could find points of similarity in each other's blood. They were two women who had governed over their respective countries for a period within the long history of their world.

"No matter whether it was because of our bloodlines, the will of the people or predictions, fate made us accept these positions of power. It doesn't matter what reason you became king....or regent of the people, there's always a logic behind it. It'll be wrong of you to forget this and give up your power to others to take over for you. Flynn, remember this, the reason for accepting this power lies deep within yourself, you must find it on your own, then protect your country at the risk of your own life."

"...I know."

"You should never do what I did...ah ~ but for a change of topic, it won't be too bad to be a regent of many loves, would it?"

That moment of soul-searching revelation was drawn to a close by her tone that sounded so much like that of a teenage girl. Cecilia pressed both hands against the glass window and with her forehead pressed against it, gazed downwards.

"There are so many men down there, there must be someone suitable for you! Why don't you try finding a reserve lover for yourself before the competition resumes?"

"No, Lady Cecilia, I can't!"

"It's alright! Although I seem like a busybody, please still accept my good intentions..... darn, this is no fun! I can't even make out their features clearly from this height....oh right!"

Cecilia opened the luggage belonging to her companions and took out a palmsized cylinder. Unfolding it to it's full length revealed it as a delicately made silver telescope.

"I forgot I had this. This is the maryuku generated telescope which my friend

Anissina made for me! See, since it has a maryuku element added to it, you can enjoy the view of any place all you like, plus it's got the night view feature, so you can see even your subject's eyelashes in any dark environment! This comes in handy for observing men secretly, but it should be useful for watching the World's Best Tournament as well."

"Observing...men?"

"Wait, let me see...why is Heika wearing that strange mask? This ruins his cute face...."

Flynn wasn't feeling angry even though the mask her husband had left behind was being described as 'strange'.

Flynn grabbed the telescope and looked at the darkened resting area for Dai Shimaron.

"I was so shocked just now when I saw Wolfram, then the second representative for the other side turned out to be Adalbert, this is so surprising. I never imagined that I would get to see other Mazoku in my travels around the world...ah!" (Cecilia)

"What is it?"

The lady beside her seemed suddenly frozen. She seemed tongue-tied and her speech became unclear, she was trembling so much that no one could have made out what she was saying.

"How could this happen....Shinou Heika, you...."

How many trials do you have to make this child go through?

My optimism had vanished due to the shock of the moment.

The glint of a sword could be seen from the darkness of the far-off Dai Shimaron resting area, then the outline of a tall man could be seen getting to his feet. Under the illumination of the torches, the brown hair typical of the people of Shimaron could be seen, and also half of his face. Although I couldn't be sure because of the distance, his eyes should be the light brown typical of most the people in this land.

But...we were so astounded by the scene in front if us that we almost forgot to

breathe.

"...Conrad..?"

Conrad Weller kyo's left foot stepped onto the snowy ground.

"Darn!"

My knees were shaking so hard, it felt as if my feet were slowly sinking into the muddy ground. I uttered a meaningless cry and stamped onto the unstable ground. Maybe because I was finding difficulty breathing, I tossed the mask to one side and rushed forward, then realized that I wasn't stuck in the muddy ground, but was instead stuck in the thick snow. Murata was calling out my name from behind, and Wolfram, who was unable to move about much, was rising from his seat on the bench, commanding Jozak to take action. I didn't know that my vision could be like a video camera that had a full (360 degree) view, I could see everything behind me so clearly.

Darn, I had been so worried!

I was running while clenching my right fist, thinking that I should first give him a punch before anything else. I was nearly there, he was right in front of me. I swung my right hand with all my might and took one final step forward.

"Waah..!"

Although Weller kyo hadn't budged an inch, my vision suddenly became a blur of grey, it was then that I realized that I had slipped on the dirty snowy ground. I had fallen down, how could I fall down at a moment like this?!

"It's been quite a while, Heika....are you alright?"

Conrad, who was smiling a familiar smile, took off the glove from his hand that wasn't wielding his sword, but it wasn't the one he usually used. I gripped his offered hand without hesitation and got to my feet unsteadily. His palm was warm although his knees and chest were all soaked through.

"...so you're still alive."

"Yes, I'm still alive."

Jozak, who had run through icy cold water to approach us, had stopped at a distance away. I could see him gripping his axe tightly in his hand and was

puzzled. Why was he holding his weapon?

This is Weller kyo! You know him too, don't you? This is Conrad.

His eyebrow still had that old injury, and that silvery shade typical of him surrounding him; that always calm, kindly smile he would give everyone. I hadn't called out his name, but my eye had fallen on my hand which he was holding. That was the hand which had held mine in the past, the familiar fingers, and his left hand which he had clumsily worn the baseball glove.

"...you still have your left hand?!"

"It's still here! But it's really a pity...this arm isn't the one that's held you in the past. However both my legs are intact, do you want to make sure?"

"Why? How can this be? Then this means that Maxine got hold of someone else's arm? Or was that a fake?"

I see, that was just an arm that looked like his. But this wasn't possible, that really had been his arm!

"Heika!"

I'd never heard Jozak speak with such urgency before.

"Please back away from him!"

"Why? Jozak, Conrad's still alive! You should be more honest and express how you feel inside..."

"Listen Heika, please back away from him. He's the third one."

"The third one, what...."

"Look at the clothes he's wearing. Please leave, he's the third competitor!"

Weller kyo's clothes were of a color very incompatible with him. That was a yellow and white striped uniform that wasn't suitable for camouflage in the wilderness, and I had hated that striking color before arriving here.

That was the uniform of the Shimaron soldiers.

"How could you wear this?!"

Blood was rising to the top of my head, causing my temples to throb quickly,

throbbing so fast I was getting a headache.

"How could you wear these clothes?! Why is this happening...why're you in Shimaron..."

Weller kyo, who I had grabbed by the collar, was answering nonchalantly, "This has been my land all along."

My fingers felt as if they had been frozen by ice.

The close Mazoku ally who had the bloodline of a human king flicked the snow off my cheek with his left hand.